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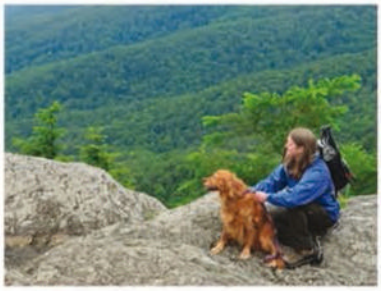
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Whitewater Grand Prix kayaker Adriene Levknecht

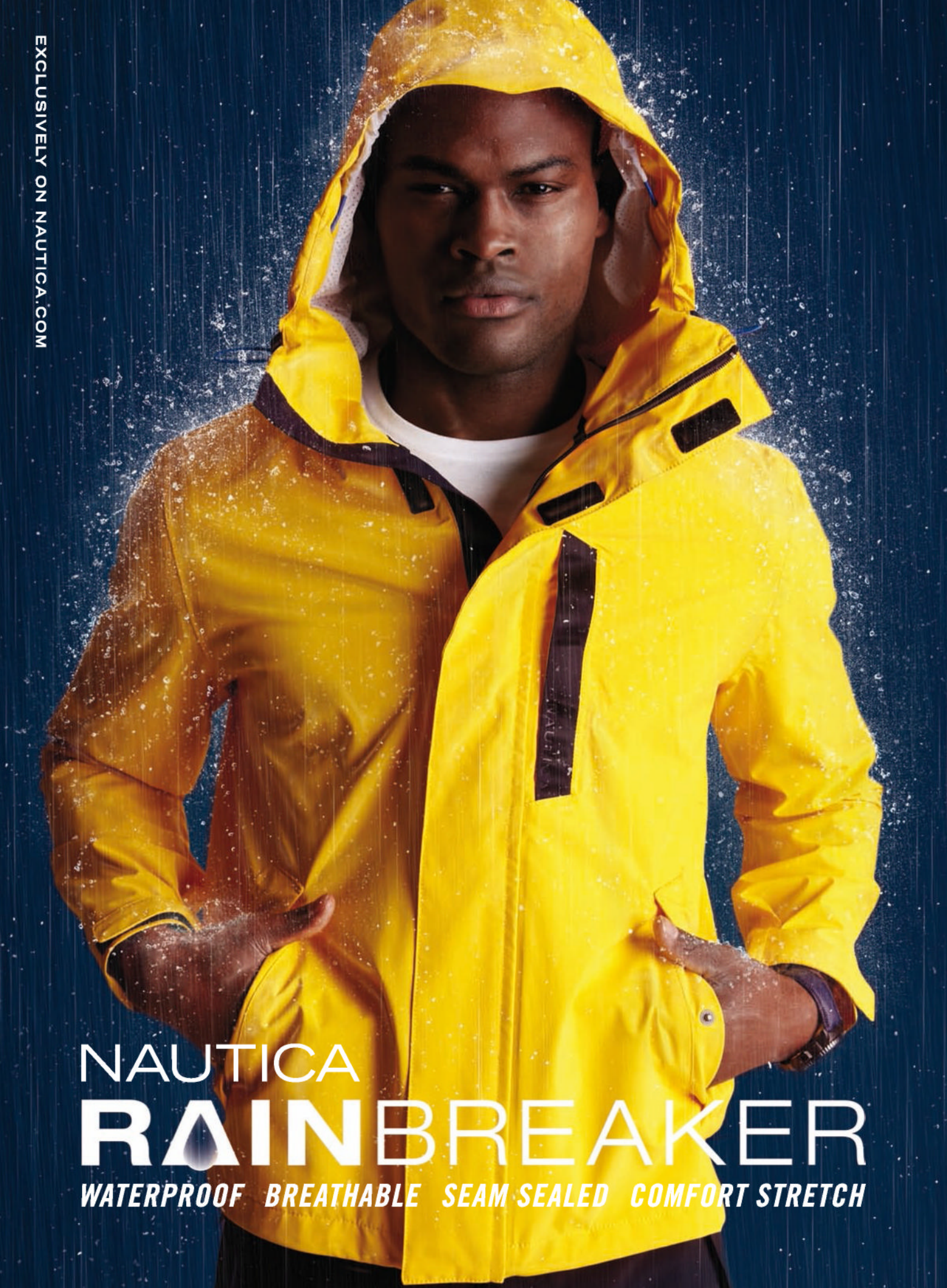
2015 BEST OF TRAVEL
50 ONE DIRECTION
Our annual travel awards point you to the coolest adventures and destinations on earth. Paddleboard Belize. Raft Fiji. Eat kimchi in Austin. From beaches and outfitters to lodges and luggage, this is your road map to bliss. BY TIM NEVILLE AND STEPHANIE PEARSON

74 THE GREEN LANTERN
Last December, Greenpeace sparked worldwide outrage when a team of activists damaged Peru's fragile Nazca Lines. Now executive director Kumi Naidoo is trying to rescue the group from the biggest gaffe in its 43-year history. BY ABE STREEP

80 A GLORIOUS WAY TO DIE
It's hard to say which is scarier at the Whitewater Grand Prix—the ice-choked Class V rapids or the quantity of alcohol its participants consume the night before running them. FREDERICK REIMERS drops in on kayaking's wildest competition.

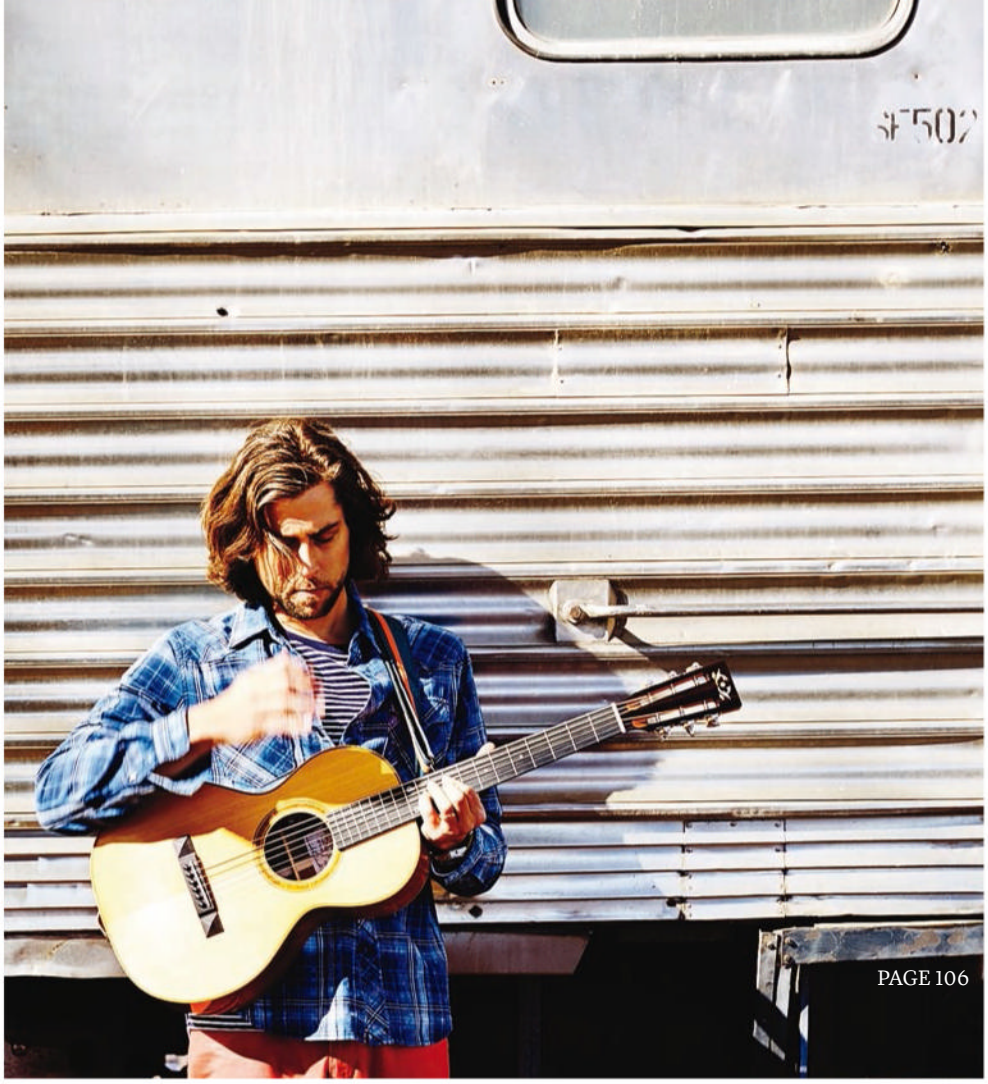
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TripAdvisor is the most powerful travel tool on earth. But what drives reviewers to swoon over boutique hotels and grouse about shower drains—and can we really trust the wisdom of the crowd? BY TOM VANDERBILT

Cover photograph by NICOLE MOULTON; this page by THOMAS PRIOR


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"THE FOLKS AT DELTA CHECK-IN KNOW ME BY NAME." —TOURING MUSICIAN DAVID BERKELEY

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ON THE COVER:
Doubtful Sound, New Zealand.
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CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: HANNAH MCCAUGHEY (2); COURTESY OF SEALANDER; BUDDY MAYS/ALAMY

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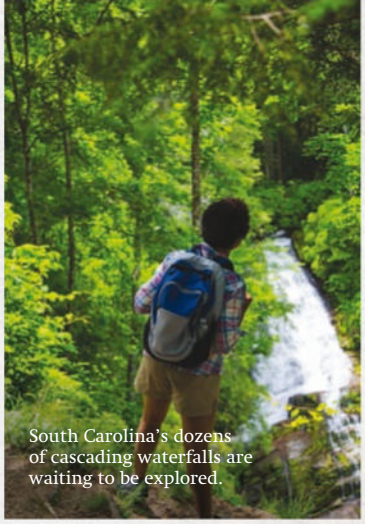
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CODY TUTTLE
Last September, Tuttle captured Yosemite native Lonnie Kauk on the Bachar-Yerian route, halfway up 9,900-foot Medlicott Dome, a wall of granite in Tuolumne Meadows, California. "It's one of the scariest climbs in Yosemite," says Tuttle, who traveled to the park from nearby Mammoth Lakes, where he lives, and rappelled down to Kauk as he worked through the second, most daunting pitch. "There were moments when there was no room for error, and Lonnie was either going to take a 100-foot fall or press through. But he kept his cool."
THE TOOLS: Canon 5D MK III, 16–35mm f/2.8 lens, ISO 320, f/6.3, 1/400 second

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JOHN WELLBURN

For ten days last May, Wellburn, who lives in Williams Lake, British Columbia, rode miles of unmapped trails in south Peru with professional mountain biker Chris Van Dine in order to find a new route to the Inca city of Choquequirao. Twenty-one miles from the ruins, the photographer turned back to see Van Dine on an opposing ledge, a few thousand feet above the Yanama River. "It was the only time the mists cleared that day," says Wellburn. "Right away I knew this shot was unreal."

THE TOOLS: Nikon D600, 16–35mm f/4 lens, ISO 320, f/5.6, 1/400 second

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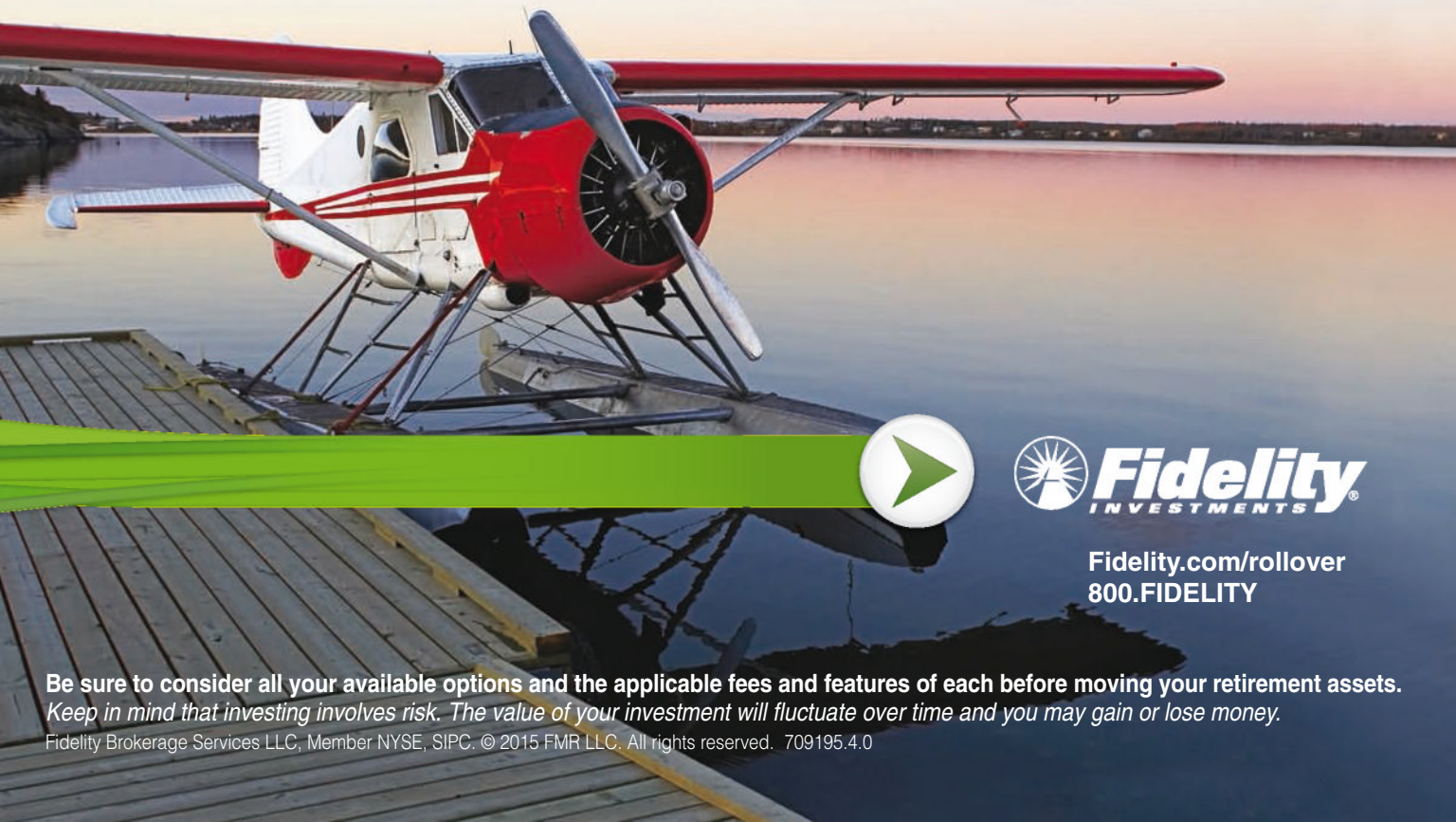
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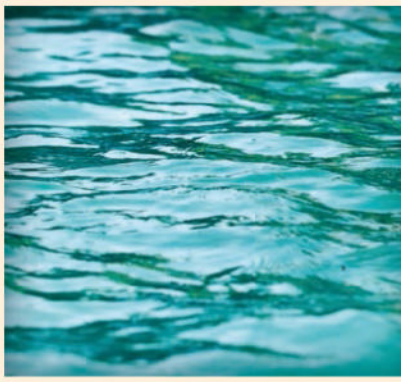
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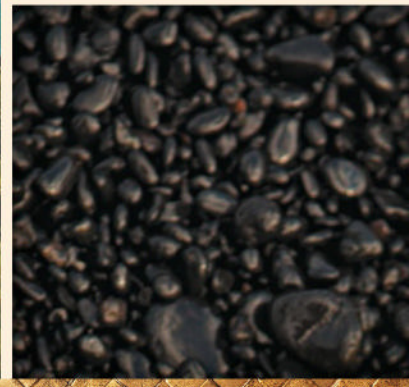


DAN PATITUCCI
Patitucci and professional climber Simon Duverney spent a day on the Greek island of Telendos last November, stopping at rarely visited Crystal Cave. "When we looked out from the back, we knew Simon had to climb it," says the photographer, who lives in Interlaken, Switzerland. Duverney hung near an anchor, 150 feet in the air, while Patitucci took this photo from another route. "He was only up there five minutes, but it turned out to be the best shot of the trip."
THE TOOLS: Canon 5D Mark III, 16–35mm f/2.8 lens, ISO 640, f/5.6, 1/250 second









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Where to Go Now

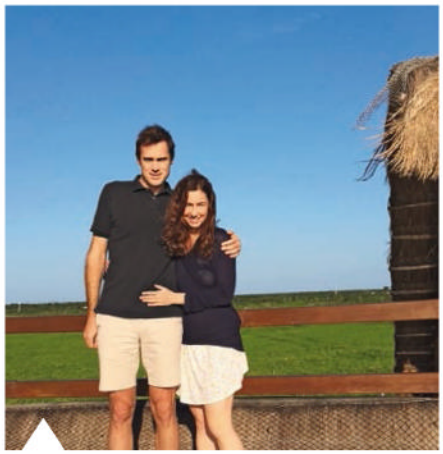
Warning: unless you're an annoyingly carefree bon vivant with a hefty trust fund, reading our annual Best of Travel awards ("One Direction," page 50) may trigger a deep sense of dissatisfaction with the pathetic state of your mundane life. There are so many cool places to go, you'll think as you flip through our 40 epic selections. And not enough time! Why am I stuck at this desk!

Do not panic—this is a totally natural reaction. (I have it myself every year.) And if we've done our job, any mild depression our list elicits will quickly give way to feelings of inspiration and the sudden realization of how lucky you are. Why? Because there's never been a better time to travel in search of adventure. While classic destinations like New Zealand and Patagonia continue to improve their travel infrastructure and options every year, new must-see territory is constantly opening up. Just look at two of our first-time picks this year: Gardens of the Queen National Park, in formerly embargoed Cuba, and the longtime war-torn state of Sri Lanka. And as Tom Vanderbilt's excellent profile of the website TripAdvisor demonstrates ("Loudsourcing," page 88), there's more information about these places available than ever before.

Of course, the downside to all those consumer reviews is having to wade through the avalanche and choose where to go next. But that's the beauty of our annual awards. *Outside* has been covering the adventure-travel beat for nearly four decades, and our two veteran Best of Travel writers, Tim Neville and Stephanie Pearson, have spent months poring over the latest trip offerings and scouring the globe to uncover surprising new ideas. We know this beat, and now we've narrowed your choices of hotels, destinations, outfitters, and travel gear from approximately 10.6 million to 40. The final choice is still on you, but the task is at least manageable. Or maybe you'll get that trust fund.

—CHRISTOPHER KEYES (@KEYESER)

"GREENPEACE PICKED AND WON BIG FIGHTS BY RELYING ON A SIMPLE FORMULA: FIND SOMEONE HARMING THE ENVIRONMENT, CONFRONT THEM WITH CAMERAS ROLLING, AND USE PUBLICITY TO GENERATE OUTRAGE." —ABE STREEP, PAGE 74



WHO REVIEWS THE REVIEWERS? To write about the ubiquity and influence of TripAdvisor ("Loudsourcing," page 88), we had contributing editor **Tom Vanderbilt** book a vacation in Mexico with his wife, photographer Jancee Dunn (who shot the piece), and their daughter. Vanderbilt put his take on the page, but we wanted to know what Dunn thought.

OUTSIDE: Did you let Tom plan this trip all on his own? Or did you help?
DUNN: We spent hours scanning TripAdvisor, each of us on separate computers. Our living room looked like a command center.

Now that you're back, will you keep using it?
I've been on it day and night for a trip we're planning to Italy. Once you're a TripAdvisor addict, you're screwed. You will never leave your apartment. I'm telling you, after we put our kid to bed tonight, it's right back to TripAdvisor.

The big question: What rating would you give the site?
Four out of five bubbles. It's a control freak's dream.

FACEBOOK COMMENT OF THE MONTH:
Charles Moss Session beers have their place, but not usually in my hand.

Like · Reply · 3
January 31 at 5:10pm

AND THE HARD-EARNED-SELFIE AWARD GOES TO... This January, after four previous attempts, arctic explorer **Lonnie Dupre** finally climbed 20,320-foot Denali alone in winter. To pull it off, he spent five days at 11,200 feet pinned down by nasty weather, staving off hypothermia. "Of all my attempts, this year was the hardest," says Dupre. "If I hadn't made it to the summit, I would have pulled the plug on the whole project." So what did he do when he got to the top? "The wind was picking up, so I got out of there," he says. Dupre did stay long enough to snap this photo, however. Well done, Lonnie.





SHIFTING GEARS
Outside Online publishes more than 50 in-depth product reviews each month—everything from powder skis to puffy jackets to sport watches—so we decided to give that coverage the love it deserves: with its own Facebook page. Stay on top of all things gear by liking us at **facebook.com/outsidegear**.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: GRAYSON SCHAFFER; COURTESY OF JANCEE DUNN AND TOM VANDERBILT; COURTESY OF LONNIE DUPRE; INGA HENDRICKSON


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FEEDBACK

RUNNING ON FUMES

The February issue of Outside *covered controversial topics like the fight over American wolves ("Wolflandia") and live-plucking geese for down ("For the Birds"). But what really got readers fired up was writer Gordy Megroz's one-man study on the performance-enhancing power of THC in "Runner's High."*

Most of the cannabis-smoking athletes I know show increased performance while high, but in the psychological realm noticeable variations occur: some people experience an active mood; others feel too relaxed to exercise. It's a mistake not to realize that a drug's effects can only really be understood in the context of individual users.
DIEGO BENJAMIN
CAGUAS, PUERTO RICO

I'm glad Megroz wrote about this, but I'm not sure I want to risk milky red eyes only to last 30 seconds longer on the treadmill.
REBECCA LESSNER
PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

Eye drops, Rebecca.

ALPHA DOGS

As your story notes, wolf populations in the West have far exceeded the goals set when they were first put on the endangered species list ("Wolflandia"). There are way too many of them out there, and they're spreading like wildfire.
JON CAPPERELLI
ONLINE

If a rancher kills a wolf that is threatening his livestock, I can understand that. What I can't understand or tolerate are people killing any wolf they can get their sights on purely for the joy of killing. That's just an extension of the mindless gun violence permeating our entire culture.
MICHELLE LEMLEY
ONLINE

ETHICAL DOWN

Stating that the down industry is "grisly" and "dirty" does an injustice to that industry. There are many traceability and certification programs that have been available for some time. So-called "live plucking" is not a pervasive or accepted practice. Feathers are a natural byproduct of the food industry. There is no advantage to illegal harvesting, which is inhumane, expensive, and often damaging to the feathers as well as the meat.
DAVID SWEET
PRESIDENT, AMERICAN DOWN AND FEATHER COUNCIL
NEW YORK CITY

CONTACT US:
letters@outsidemag.com, facebook.com/outsidemagazine, @outsidemagazine

THE WOODSHED

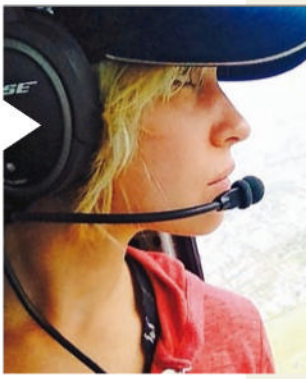
In February's "Wolflandia," the U.S. Forest Service was credited with reintroducing wolves in the West in the 1990s. In fact, the responsible agency was the Fish and Wildlife Service. *Outside* regrets the error.

Between the Lines

OFFICE SPACE

For their tag-team, round-the-world solar-powered airplane flight ("Good Day Sunshine," page 28), Bertrand Piccard and partner André Borschberg will stuff 26 pounds of food, 3.3 gallons of water, six bottles of oxygen, and one grown man into a 40-square-foot cockpit for up to five days at a time. Which would impress us if not for associate editor **Meaghen Brown**, who edits *Outside*'s Essentials section (page 96) and routinely crams enough gear into her 98-square-foot office to launch her own circumnavigation. At press time, that included:

PAIRS OF SKIS: 2
SWIMSUITS: 7
BIKE HELMETS: 1
PUFFY JACKETS: 10
OMNIBARS: 250
PAIRS OF CLIMBING SHOES: 3
INSULATED MUGS: 4
BLENDERS: 1
CLIMBING HARNESSES: 2
CRASH PADS: 1
RUNNING SHORTS AND TANK TOPS: INDETERMINATE



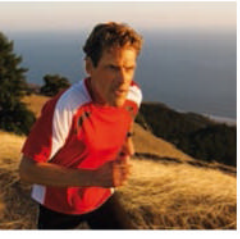
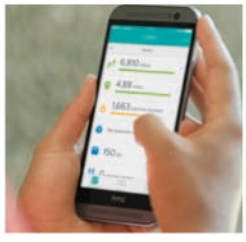


SHAKE YOUR BOOTIES

There's only one person we'd trust to report on the Whitewater Grand Prix ("A Glorious Way to Die," page 80), the two-week-long, high-stakes pro-kayaking competition that took place in Quebec last May. That person is **Frederick Reimers**. The longtime contributor (and former *Canoe & Kayak* editor) is a lifelong paddler who can hold his own in the water. But his biggest challenge wasn't covering the action—it was steering clear of the near constant partying. "I stayed sober enough to write it down if someone said something funny," Reimers says. "When I get drunk, the first thing I want to do is go to bed."

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: HANNAH MCCAUGHEY; COURTESY OF MEAGHEN BROWN; COURTESY OF FREDERICK REIMERS









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Nuwara Eliya, Sri Lanka

BETTER, BEST, BESTEST

There are 40 award winners in our Best of Travel feature ("One Direction," page 50), our annual roundup of the most exciting places to see now and the top outfitters to take you there. And we have even more online, from wilderness base camps to our favorite domestic and international getaways. **outsideonline.com/bestoftravel**

HOT-TUB TIME MACHINE

David Berkeley, the subject of this month's Style photo shoot ("Ramblin' Man," page 106), is a talented musician and songwriter. Before that, however, he was an *Outside* intern alongside current editor Christopher Keyes and executive editor Sam Moulton. Here, Keyes and Moulton recall their days slogging away with Berkeley in the fact-checking department.



Berkeley (left) with Keyes and Moulton (in sunglasses)

KEYES: David had a lot of loud phone conversations in our shared cubicle about some band he was managing.

MOULTON: The Humming. I remember him trying to charm various bar owners into giving them free drinks.

KEYES: He gave us CDs, and they were... not that good.

MOULTON: I watched him perform at an open-mike night somewhere in town, and I remember thinking, You're way better than those guys. They should be managing *you*.

KEYES: I knew he had an outstanding voice, because he spent hours ducking into the vacant accounting cubicle next door to call his girlfriend in Paris. It was the first time I understood what "cooing" sounded like.

MOULTON: He could do it for hours. Truly amazing.

KEYES: But his music is fantastic. The world is a better place because David sucked at being a magazine intern.

MOULTON: He did get something out of working here, though. The girlfriend in Paris is now his wife.

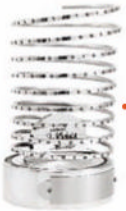
WE FOUND THIS IN OUR GEAR CAGE



Coker Cycles' Wheelman 4130 chromoly penny-farthing. $900; cokercycles.com

WINNING THE INTERNET

OUTSIDE ONLINE JUST TURNED 20. HERE, WE TAKE A FOND LOOK BACK AT SOME OF THE SITE'S MILESTONES.



January 1995: Outside Online goes live via Starwave (which also launched ESPN and Mr. Showbiz).

2000: Webby Award for Best Travel Website!

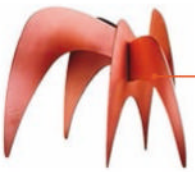


2002: Kayakers attempting a first descent of Tibet's Tsangpo River file audio dispatches via satellite phone (though users are forced to install endless RealPlayer updates to listen to them).



January 2009: Good—we send our first tweet. Bad—it includes the phrase "posted a blog."

April 2014: Our most watched video to date (over a million views) goes live: "How to Fix a Flat: With Lance Armstrong."



May 2014: National Magazine Award finalist for best website.



January 2015: The most read feature in Outside Online history is posted. The subject? Fake meat.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CHRIS SORENSEN/GALLERY STOCK; COURTESY OF COKER CYCLES; NO CREDIT; MICHAEL KEVIN DALY/GETTY; OUTSIDE ONLINE; NO CREDIT; MISHA GRAVENOR; MICHAEL MCLAUGHLIN

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EditorFit

Outside editors aren't just expert journalists and writers, they're also super fit. We wanted to find out just _how_ fit. So for one week, we outfitted four of them with the most advanced tracker out there: Fitbit Surge™. The results may surprise you.





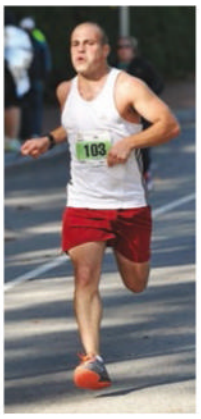












Outside editors are constantly on the go. From testing gear and editing stories to traveling the world and trying the latest workout trends, they live our mission every day. And this week was no different. Not only were our editors running rounds of text through multiple edits at 7,260 feet elevation in our Santa Fe headquarters, they were trail running, skiing, road biking, bike commuting and rock climbing.

Fitbit Surge™ was there for all of it—monitoring their heart rate and calories burned. Measuring steps taken, distance traveled and floors climbed. Tracking cross-training and cardio workouts. Even recording their routes with built-in GPS. During every adventure, call and text notifications kept them connected. And auto sleep determined their sleep quality at night—or lack thereof, since this was also issue-closing week. To see how all seven days stacked up, editors checked their stats and progress on the Fitbit dashboard.

Look below to see the results for yourself, and find out if you've got what it takes to be EditorFit.

MEET THE EDITORS The four Fitbit Surge™ guinea pigs



Assistant editor **Reid Singer** (29) has run marathons in nine states.



Essentials and *Style* editor **Meaghen Brown** (26) enjoys rock climbing and ultra running.



Matt Skenazy (28) edits *Bodywork* and is a surfer at heart.

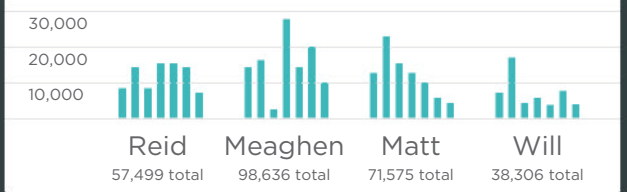


Will Dietrich-Egensteiner (25) is an assistant editor and a beast of a rugby player.

AVG. RESTING HEART RATE

57.2 bpm

DAILY STEPS TAKEN



ACTIVITIES INCLUDED

Running
Cycling
Writing
Rock Climbing
Rugby
Walking
Pizza Eating
Skiing
Making Copies
Sleeping

TOTAL CALORIES BURNED

75,073 calories

TOTAL DISTANCE TRAVELED

130.36 miles

TOTAL FLOORS CLIMBED

1,562 floors

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NEWS FROM THE FIELD

DISPATCHES



Good Day Sunshine

BERTRAND PICCARD AND ANDRÉ BORSCHBERG WILL NOW ATTEMPT THE FIRST SOLAR-POWERED, ROUND-THE-WORLD FLIGHT IN THEIR HIGH-TECH, CARBON-FIBER, KIND-OF-CRAMPED PLANE

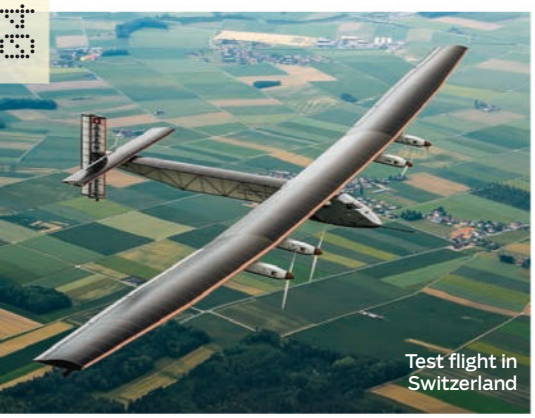
by Jacob Baynham

ON A MARCH morning in 1999, Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones landed their hot-air balloon in Egypt, completing the first nonstop balloon flight around the world. Of the 3.7 tons of propane they'd brought with them, only 90 pounds remained. Piccard, a Swiss aeronaut, stepped out of the gondola and made a resolution: one day he would find a way to ring the globe without using any fuel at all.

The time has come. In March, Piccard, 57, and Borschberg, 62, a Swiss engineer and former fighter pilot, take off from Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, to attempt the first round-the-world flight in a solar-powered plane, the *Solar Impulse 2*. Over the next five months, the two men will spend a combined 25 days in the air, though only one of them will be in the plane at a time. They'll trade places at scheduled stops

04.15

The *Solar Impulse 2* in flight


Test flight in Switzerland


Piccard

in Oman, India, Myanmar, China, Honolulu, Phoenix, New York City, and either Southern Europe or North Africa, depending on weather conditions over the Atlantic.

Piccard hopes the flight will advance clean energy, the way NASA-funded space expeditions led to artificial limbs and better golf clubs. "We need pioneers who show that impossible things can be done," says Piccard. "Then industry will take over, and one day everyone will think this is normal."

Piccard and Borschberg spent 12 years and $150 million working with more than 80 engineers to research, design, and test the *Solar Impulse 2*. The craft resembles a giant glider and has a wider wingspan than a Boeing 747, but its carbon-fiber frame keeps it lighter than a Chevy Suburban. More than 17,000 hair-thin solar cells on the wings charge an array of lithium batteries, which can power the four prop engines for ten hours without sunlight. During the day, the plane will fly at 28,000 feet, where it's usually clear and the air is thinner. At sunset, the pilot will cut the motors and slowly glide to 5,000 feet to save battery power. The cockpit isn't pressurized, so an oxygen mask is mandatory.

"WE NEED PIONEERS who show that impossible things can be done," *SAYS PICCARD.*

Life aboard the *Solar Impulse 2* will be efficient but a little uncomfortable. Each engine can generate the horsepower of a Vespa, resulting in airspeeds between 22 and 87 miles per hour. Temperatures inside will swing between 104 and minus four, since there's no heating or cooling system. The plane is susceptible to heavy winds, turbulence, and thunderstorms. Owing to the craft's minimal undercarriage, ground-crew members will mount e-bikes and ride alongside it to support the wings during liftoff and after touchdown (which will happen only when winds are lowest, often early or late in the day). There's no backup power in the event that the batteries die. If something goes wrong, the pilot is equipped with a parachute and a life raft.

There will also be lengthy ocean crossings to endure—as many as five days and nights of continuous flying. Both men have spent up to 72 hours in a flight simulator and completed three test flights, but neither has flown for such an extended period. Though the plane has autopilot, it's so sensitive that only a single 20-minute rest every few hours will be allowed during flight. "This is why I like adventure," Piccard says. "It's a way to push human performance."

Part of that involves inhabiting a cockpit that's barely big enough to lean back, let alone stand up. To help ease cramps, avoid blood clots, and help with digestion, the men will perform exercises designed for tight spaces, like rolling their ankles and flexing their arms. Bathroom breaks won't be necessary: the seat doubles as a toilet.

"The fact that the cockpit is small is not a problem," he says. "If you asked astronauts if the capsule was too small when they went to the moon, they probably didn't even notice. It was too exciting." *O*

ALL IN THE FAMILY

It's no coincidence that Piccard is one of this generation's most famous explorers. It's in his blood. —J.B.



Auguste Piccard, grandfather
Took a balloon to 53,000 feet in 1931 and developed the bathyscaphe to travel to the ocean floor.



Jean Piccard, great-uncle
Invented both the plastic balloon and the cluster balloons used by the U.S. military for atmospheric research. (He and his brother are the namesakes of *Star Trek* captain Jean-Luc Picard.)

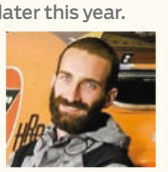


Jacques Piccard, father
Jacques and U.S. Navy lieutenant Don Walsh were the first to reach the bottom of the Mariana Trench, in 1960.

WAIT WATCHERS

IT'S BEEN A GOOD YEAR FOR LONG-ANTICIPATED FEATS. PICCARD IS LAUNCHING HIS SOLAR PLANE (12 YEARS OF PREPARATION), TOMMY CALDWELL AND KEVIN JORGENSON FREE-CLIMBED EL CAPITAN'S DAWN WALL (TEN YEARS), AND LONNIE DUPRE MADE A WINTER ASCENT OF DENALI (FIVE). HERE ARE FOUR MORE ON THE HORIZON—OR NOT. —BEN YEAGER

RIDE AN ICEBERG
Since 2012, Italian explorer **ALEX BELLINI** has been working on a plan to board an ice block in Greenland and ride it until it melts. He'll try later this year.



WALK THE GLOBE
KARL BUSHBY set out from Chile in 1998 and has since logged 20,000 miles. He needs a Russian visa to complete the final 16,000.

SURF A 100-FOOT WAVE
GARRETT McNAMARA and others have been chasing the big one for 14 years. McNamara's world record is still 22 feet shy.



ASCEND K2 IN WINTER
For a decade, climbers like **DENIS URUBKO** have tried to scale the peak off-season, when conditions are all but impassable.

←LOOKING GOOD

DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH→

PREVIOUS PAGES: SOLAR IMPULSE/REVILLARD/REZO.CH. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SOLAR IMPULSE/REVILLARD/REZO.CH (2); AP; AFP/GETTY; AP; CORY RICHARDS/NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CREATIVE; FRANCISCO SECO/CORBIS; BOB MILLER/GETTY; RENATO GRIGNASCHI.


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No More Barbie Gear

HEY, OUTDOOR-EQUIPMENT COMPANIES: PLEASE STOP IGNORING WOMEN WHO RIP

by Meaghen Brown and Axie Navas

THE ADVENTURE sports world can be an enlightened place when it comes to gender. Athletes like alpinist Melissa Arnot and ski racer Mikaela Shiffrin are as celebrated as Dave Hahn and Bode Miller. But that doesn't mean the gear industry got the memo. In January, at the Outdoor Retailer trade show in Salt Lake City, business leaders gathered to strategize about how to attract more women to sports like skiing and mountain biking. We appreciate the effort, and as gear editors at *Outside,* we'd like to suggest a way to start: by producing as much high-performance equipment for women as you do for men.

Don't get us wrong. Gearmakers have come a long way since hall-of-famer Jeannie Thoren convinced Blizzard to produce a women's ski in 1986 and Santa Cruz debuted its Juliana mountain bikes in 1999, named for legendary racer Juli Furtado. But most of what's out there is still designed for and marketed toward beginners (many of whom, judging from the offerings, can't get enough of flower prints and the color pink).

"I don't need softer flex or a heel riser to help me get out of the backseat," says professional skier Caroline Gleich, who is sponsored by Patagonia. Gear manufacturers would be smart to listen.

Female participation in skiing and cycling has grown 4.4 percent since 2009, according to the Outdoor Industry Association (OIA). The number of female mountain bikers jumped 22 percent from 2012 to 2013, and among snowboarders under 35, female riders are the only segment on the rise. As participation has gone up, so has our desire for the tools we need to play hard. The most recent OIA report showed that sales of women's gear went up 10 percent between 2012 and 2013.

BY THE NUMBERS

65.6 MILLION

FEMALE PARTICIPANTS IN OUTDOOR SPORTS IN 2013.

Which is why it's frustrating that, where performance is concerned, most of what's available tops out at the beginner or intermediate level. At *Outside*'s 2015 mountain-bike test, the Liv Intrigue 1—the company's highest-end trail bike—performed adequately on tame singletrack, but female testers unanimously preferred the aggressive build of the Juliana Roubion, which is really just a Santa Cruz Bronson clad in teal and slapped with pink grips. At last year's alpine ski test, models designed and constructed specifically for women—including options from Armada, K2, and Nordica—scored consistently lower than those that were actually repackaged versions of men's skis. The biggest complaint: lightweight cores made the former too flimsy for hard riding.

We understand that the women's market is smaller than the men's, and that companies must allocate their R&D budgets accordingly. But as more women excel at their sports, it behooves manufacturers to make higher-level products available. Companies like DPS Skis and Santa Cruz do this by offering identical specs in their men's and women's equipment. "We all ride the same trails," says pro mountain biker and Juliana athlete Anka Martin. "Some of us are taller and some shorter. But I want the same geometry as the guys, the same bottom-bracket height, the same bad-ass bike."

That's not to say we're against gear tailored for women's bodies. But high-performance examples scarcely exist—men's equipment is usually the only choice. "I like how men's skis perform," says Gleich, "but as a petite, powerful woman, I need a shorter size."

We also want to be taken seriously when you sell to us. We're fully capable of hucking cliffs and sending hard lines—but giving us products with cutesy names and drenching ads in My Little Pony colors isn't the way to inspire today's women. Instead, show us succeeding at our sport. That's exactly what Black Diamond did last year when it used gritty black-and-white photos of ice climbers and mountaineers to showcase its new women's apparel line.

Brands may be squeamish about turning us away. According to Scott McGuire, a former product director at the North Face and president of the marketing firm Mountain Lab, "When you portray the hardcore side of female athletes, some companies think it won't come off as aspirational, so they tone it down."

Don't. Treat us with the same respect afforded us in the field, and give us the gear that lets us tackle any line or trail we want. We'll take care of the rest.

Photograph by HANNAH MCCAUGHEY

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... that's before the sound barrier was broken.

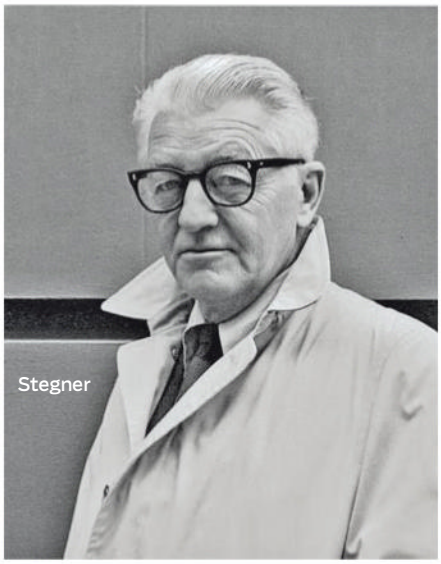
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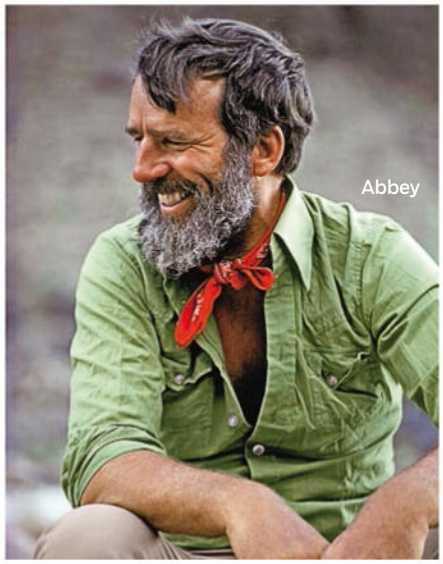
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Stegner

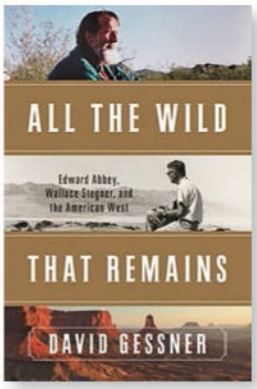

Abbey

Double Take

A FRESH LOOK AT WALLACE STEGNER AND EDWARD ABBEY

by Andrea Clark Mason

RELEASED IN APRIL, David Gessner's *All the Wild that Remains: Edward Abbey, Wallace Stegner, and the American West* ($27, W. W. Norton) is a biography of two of the West's most iconic authors. At least, it's primarily biography; it's also a travelogue in which Gessner, a thoughtful and irreverent essayist, traces the two men's lives as they headed west across the country.

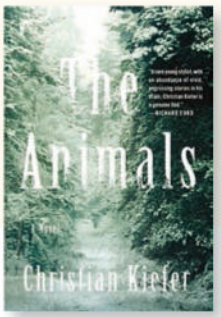


He begins in the east, visiting Vermont, the setting of Stegner's last novel, *Crossing to Safety,* and Home, Pennsylvania, where Abbey was raised "without flush toilets, with a gun sometimes in hand, and with an intimacy with animals both wild and tame." In the early going, much of what Gessner learns fits in with what we already think: Stegner the restrained writer and Stanford professor; Abbey the wild man of conservation with a running FBI file.

But those conceptions begin to change as Gessner makes his way west and discovers that Stegner, who lobbied to pass the Wilderness Act and save Dinosaur National Monument from flooding, was more radical than many believe. "Having witnessed the failure of a thousand rugged individualists, his father among them," writes Gessner, "he came to believe in community," predating the counterculture's adoption of the idea in the 1960s. By contrast, Gessner begins to think that Abbey, "for all his own forays into monkeywrenching and protest," wasn't always radical so much as selfish. "Some of Abbey's bad personal behavior was brave. But some was simply bad."

These revelations, and Gessner's subtle humor, make for an absorbing read. Abbey's and Stegner's lives, Gessner says, "are creative possibilities for living a life both good and wild." That's something many in the West still seek—and what makes this book such a great read for anyone living there.

THIS MONTH'S BEST NOVEL-SOUNDTRACK COMBO
THE BOOK: Christian Kiefer's *The Animals* ($26, Liveright) follows former criminal Bill, who lives a peaceful life managing a wildlife sanctuary in Idaho, until he's confronted by his past. **THE SOUNDTRACK:** *What You Have Come For Is Death,* an LP and expanded download of ghostly Americana produced by Kiefer—a talented musician who has played with Califone and Bill Callahan—to accompany the book. $20; hired-hand.org



SWELL JOB
HELEN HUNT'S *RIDE,* ABOUT A WOMAN WHO MOVES TO LOS ANGELES TO RECONNECT WITH HER SURFER SON, HITS THEATERS IN MAY. HOW DO HER WAVE-RIDING SKILLS COMPARE WITH OTHER SURF-FILM ACTORS OF NOTE? HERE'S A REPORT CARD.

Ride (2015)
A *New Yorker* editor (Hunt) moves to California, learns how to surf, has a fling with her instructor (Luke Wilson), and finds herself. **GRADE:** B. Hunt does surf in the film, but she's no Maya Gabeira.





Chasing Mavericks (2012)
Based on the life of Jay Moriarty, a surfer (Gerard Butler) saves a boy (Jonny Weston) from drowning and teaches him to ride waves. **GRADE:** C. Butler did his best, but it wasn't pretty—he barely survived a two-wave hold-down.

Soul Surfer (2011)
The true story of Bethany Hamilton (AnnaSophia Robb), who struggles to recover after she loses an arm to a shark attack. **GRADE:** Incomplete. (Hamilton did all the surfing for Robb.)





Blue Crush (2002)
A female professional surfer (Kate Bosworth) trains for Pipe Masters but is distracted by a hunky football star. **GRADE:** C minus. Bosworth learned to stand up, but a double was used for most of the water shots.

Point Break (1991)
An FBI agent (Keanu Reeves) infiltrates a ring of bank-robbing surfers (led by Patrick Swayze). **GRADE:** A plus. Swayze broke four ribs, Reeves had never even been on a board, and doubles did the gnarliest stuff, but who cares? "*Vaya con dios,* brah!"



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ALEX GOTFRYD/CORBIS; JOHN BLAUSTEIN; SPLASH NEWS/CORBIS; FOX 2000 PICTURES/THE KOBAL COLLECTION; ENTICING ENTERTAINMENT/THE KOBAL COLLECTION; UNIVERSAL/THE KOBAL COLLECTION/JOHN P. JOHNSON; 20TH CENTURY FOX/THE KOBAL COLLECTION/RICHARD FOREMAN



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Oil-stained wetlands along the Louisiana coast

Spill Over?

FIVE YEARS AFTER THE DEEPWATER HORIZON DISASTER, WE WANTED TO KNOW WHETHER THE GULF HAD RECOVERED—AND HOW MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE

by Kim Cross

EVERYONE REMEMBERS how it started: on April 20, 2010, the Deepwater Horizon drilling platform exploded off the coast of Louisiana, rupturing the Macondo well below it. Over the next 87 days, as much as four million barrels of oil surged into the Gulf of Mexico—the worst marine spill in history.

Over the ensuing weeks, BP, which operated the rig, launched a massive cleanup campaign: 810,000 barrels of oil were skimmed off the surface or captured from the wellhead, 1.8 million gallons of chemical dispersant were pumped into the waters, 411 surface fires were lit, miles of floating booms were deployed, and tens of thousands of workers cleaned beaches. Whether you turned on Fox News or the *Today* show, the Gulf was the story.

This year, what few headlines have appeared have focused on the third and final phase of a federal trial in Louisiana to determine how much BP can be fined under the Clean Water Act. (A judge ruled that it should fall between $3 billion and $14 billion.) Combined with previous fines and forthcoming penalties for damage to wildlife, the company will have spent nearly $40 billion in restitution. (See "Show Me the Money," page 38.)

"No company has done more to respond to an industrial accident," says BP spokesman Jason Ryan.

These days you're more likely to see an ad for Louisiana tourism (paid for, in part, by BP) than any coverage of the lingering recovery effort. I lived on this coast for years, first on the Florida Panhandle and then in New Orleans. I've swum in its waters and eaten its seafood more times than I can remember. So last December, I decided to return to the area and check on the progress myself.

BY THE NUMBERS

1.2 MILLION

GALLONS OF OIL ESTIMATED TO HAVE LEAKED EACH DAY BEFORE BP CAPPED THE WELL.

What Happened to the Oil?

There's one thing that almost everyone agrees on: it's not as bad as it could have been. In large part, this is due to bacteria that appear to have evolved to feed on the million or so barrels' worth of oil that naturally seeps from the Gulf floor each year. When the spill happened, that bacteria quickly consumed many of the alkanes found in the crude. By 2011, six months after the well was capped, the plume had disappeared. But other hydrocarbons were left behind.

According to Chris Reddy, a senior scientist at Woods Hall Oceanographic Institute, "Oil is a complex mixture; it's like a buffet. The prime rib is gone, and now the crusted-over coleslaw"—the part the bacteria didn't consume—"is still there."

How much coleslaw depends on who you ask—one of many contentious issues surrounding the event. In 2010, BP committed $500 million in funding for the Gulf of Mexico Research Institute to examine the leak's long-term impact. BP also went on a hiring spree. The company paid hundreds of scientists to study the spill in preparation for litigation, but they were bound by a gag order. The first time many of them spoke was when they testified—on BP's behalf—at the trial in Louisiana.

Today, no one's really sure how much oil is still out there. In 2010, the White House released a report claiming that only 26 percent of the spill remained in the Gulf. Scientists torpedoed the findings for not being peer reviewed. Furthermore, the only known quantity, according to Samantha Joye, a marine scientist at the University of Georgia, was how much oil was skimmed off the surface or captured at the wellhead—every other number is at best an estimate.

This much is certain: there's still a big mess on the seafloor. Joye saw it first in 2010, when she began studying the effects of the spill, and again in April 2014. On both occasions, she descended 5,000 feet in a submarine and found a layer of mud mixed with oil near the blowout site. "The mysterious caramel brown layer that we discovered in 2010 remains," she noted in 2014. "It is about the same thickness as it was in 2010 [between five and seven centimeters], and it is widespread—we drove around for over 2.5 km [1.5 miles] and saw the feature everywhere." That lines up with Reddy's October 2014 report that there was a "bathtub ring" of crude the size of Rhode Island on the seafloor.

Perhaps more disconcerting is what we've since learned about Corexit, the dispersant pumped into the water. Corexit was supposed to break down the oil but also made it more edible to fish and plankton, which otherwise don't consume it. Even worse, there's some evidence that the chemical actually hindered degradation, allowing more hydrocarbons to remain in the Gulf.

What Happened to the Fish?

How the oil will affect marine life over time remains to be seen. In the year following the spill, nearly 7,000 animals were found dead: more than 6,000 birds, **continued on page 40**

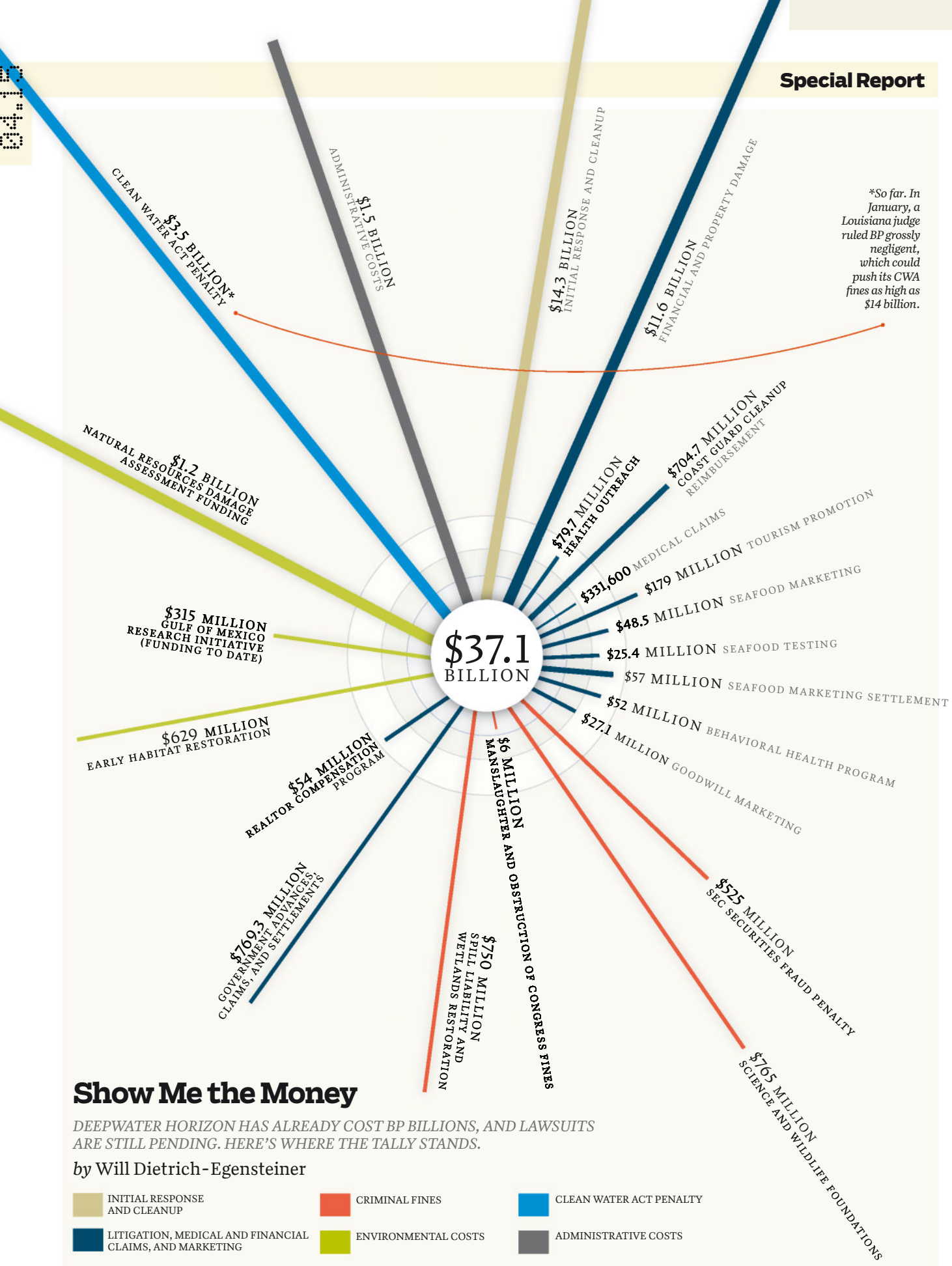
DAYMON GARDNER



For Austin Kino, the sky is a wealth of information. As a crewmember and apprentice navigator on the traditional voyaging canoe Hokule'a, he's learned the maps, legends and stories that connect sea and stars. Austin joined fellow adventurer and National Geographic photographer Ben Horton to find common ground in California's Joshua Tree National Park.

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Show Me the Money

DEEPWATER HORIZON HAS ALREADY COST BP BILLIONS, AND LAWSUITS ARE STILL PENDING. HERE'S WHERE THE TALLY STANDS.

by Will Dietrich-Egensteiner

- INITIAL RESPONSE AND CLEANUP
- CRIMINAL FINES
- CLEAN WATER ACT PENALTY
- LITIGATION, MEDICAL AND FINANCIAL CLAIMS, AND MARKETING
- ENVIRONMENTAL COSTS
- ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

SOURCES: Department of the Interior, Environmental Protection Agency, and BP public reports. All data is through January 2015.

ILLUSTRATION: HANNAH MCCAUGHEY

advertisement

DISCOVERING THE ESSENCE OF HAWAII

FOR KINDRED SPIRITS **AUSTIN KINO** AND **BEN HORTON**, THE HEART OF ALOHA WAS MORE ABOUT ATTITUDE THAN SUNSHINE AND SWAYING PALMS





Kino (left) and Horton (right) finding common ground

There is no water in sight. But two explorers, one who grew up canoe surfing in the Pacific Ocean off Oahu, the other spearfishing in the North Atlantic Ocean off Bermuda, have met for the first time in a parched wilderness of granite boulders and spiky yucca palms in Joshua Tree National Park. They are here to take part in OluKai's "Anywhere Aloha" campaign, sharing their vast knowledge in the spirit of that elusive ancient Hawaiian term that literally means ***"sharing the breath of life that is the life force inside every person."***

Traditionally, upon first greeting, the physical act of Aloha would require that the two men, Austin Kino, an apprentice navigator on *Hōkūle'a* —a legendary double-hulled Polynesian canoe that has voyaged across the globe—and Ben Horton, a *National Geographic* contributing photographer, touch noses and foreheads, then breathe in through their noses, acknowledging that they are receiving the goodness and wealth contained inside the other person. Today they are practicing the modern-day equivalent, forming a bond by spending time together in the wilderness, sharing their hard-earned, well-honed skills.

Kino has never been to Joshua Tree, but Horton, who lives in Los Angeles, uses the national park as his climbing gym and place of meditation. He's been photographing its granite monoliths and endangered yucca palms for years and leads Kino to a secret oasis off Geology Tour Road, where Kino can show him how to use a Hawaiian star compass he's just made.

"It's extremely peaceful here," says Kino as the sun sinks below the horizon and a blanket of stars shines. **"The difference in studying the stars in the desert as opposed to the ocean is that we are left without a distinct horizon."**

Still, Kino can make out Manaiakalani, or the "Chief's Fishing Line," a star line that contains a navigator's triangle of Deneb, Vega, and Altair, celestial tools that were essential to Kino on his passage from Hawaii to Tahiti last May. Surprisingly, Manaiakalani is easier to see here than on the ocean, because the earth's surface absorbs light and darkens the sky.

"This was typically the constellation that was rising right as the sun set and would be the first star line of the night that we would use to set our bearing after losing the sun," Kino explains.

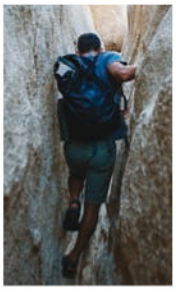


Horton, who spent two months in the Arctic documenting climate change, often using the sun to navigate, absorbs Kino's knowledge of the night sky.

"Celestial navigation is an absolute interest of mine," says Horton. "The desert, the Arctic, the ocean—they're our planet, not separate entities. If you know how to handle yourself in one environment, you can switch it over to the opposite environment. Oftentimes the ocean is a lot like the desert—you can't just dip your bucket in and get a glass of water."

Despite being a fish out of water during his week in the desert, Kino has learned a thing or two from Horton as well.

"Ben has taught me that it's possible to chase your imagination around the world," he says. "He's using a camera to connect people and their stories to care for Island Earth—a concept called Mālama Honua—just like I'm trying to contribute with the current worldwide voyage on the *Hōkūle'a*."







As for Aloha, both men agree that the spirit can be found anywhere. "It's at the core of everyone's beliefs," Kino says. "The pillars are to care for children, care for the environment, and to honor and perpetuate traditions. "Aloha" may be trademarked on Hawaii, but it's a common thread throughout all people on this great planet."

Learn more about OluKai and Anywhere Aloha at ***olukai.com/anywherealoha.***

600 sea turtles, and 150 marine mammals, including dolphins and sperm whales.

Since then, however, there have been signs that populations are bouncing back. During her 2014 dive, Joye observed a multitude of fish, squid, and eels—a marked contrast to 2010, when she saw one crab in seven hours. A recent study found that brown and white shrimp were more abundant in estuaries heavily affected by the spill. Shortly after the explosion, 37 percent of the Gulf was closed to fishing, for safety reasons and to allow populations to rebound. By April 2011, most closures were lifted, though a few areas remained off-limits until 2014. Today, commercial catches of shrimp, crabs, and yellowfin tuna remain lower than before the explosion in eight of the region's most significant fisheries (though revenues as a whole have grown by 50 percent).

THERE HAVE BEEN SIGNS THAT MARINE-LIFE POPULATIONS ARE BOUNCING BACK. During a 2014 dive, biologist Samantha Joye observed a multitude of fish, squid, and eels*—A MARKED CONTRAST TO 2010, WHEN SHE SAW ONE CRAB IN SEVEN HOURS.*

As populations struggle to recover, the scientific focus has shifted to how toxins work their way up the food chain. Of particular concern are polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs, the carcinogens associated with charred meat), which comprise between 2 and 10 percent of crude oil. The livers of vertebrates—fish, birds, humans—filter PAHs readily, but they can build up in the invertebrates, like lobsters and clams, fed on by larger fish. And because the spill struck during breeding season, the embryos and larvae of many species may have been harmed.

"Those creatures influence the species they feed on and also the species that feed on them," says Peter Hodson, an emeritus environmental-studies professor at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario. "If you knock out those embryos, the effects on fish populations could take years to see."

One species already struggling is oysters, populations of which have plummeted in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. "My production is down 93 percent," says George Barisich, an oyster farmer and shrimper from Louisiana's St. Bernard Parish. "They're not contaminated to where it'll make you sick, but there are no babies."

What Happened to the People?

If you visit the Gulf shore today, you'll see the same Caribbean-blue water and sugar-white sand that have enchanted generations. "The Gulf is undergoing a robust recovery," says BP's Ryan.

"It's still beautiful," says Phillip McDonald, executive chef at Bud and Alley's Pizza Bar in Seaside, Florida. "I just went surfing yesterday. There are nickel-size tar balls here and there, but those were there before the oil spill, occasionally."

There are, after all, roughly 2,400 oil platforms in the Gulf. While observers predicted tough times for energy companies after the explosion, those never came to pass. Production is down 27 percent across the Gulf, but that looks to change as more leases become available on prime real estate. In 2012, President Obama opened 39 million new acres to drilling; in 2014, he approved offshore fracking. Big Oil still has it good.

So do the beach towns. "Since 2011, this area has had some of its best years for tourism," says Michael Sturdivant, chairman of the Emerald Coast chapter of the Surfrider Foundation, an environmental watchdog group. But Sturdivant and others are concerned about how much oil remains in the ocean, estuaries, and marshes—and how that might affect residents. There are "tens of thousands of people in the coastal area" suffering from symptoms associated with oil exposure, according to Wilma Subra, a former EPA adviser who now assists the Louisiana Environmental Action Network. "We're seeing a lot of respiratory problems but also cardiovascular issues, memory loss, and degradation of organs."

Proving that those symptoms are oil related requires longitudinal studies that can take years. Two big ones are under way: The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences is conducting a ten-year study on the health effects of a spill, monitoring 33,000 cleanup workers and coastal residents. (It's the largest such study in history.) And a five-year project by a consortium of five universities is measuring PAH levels in subsistence-fishing communities.

Then there are the 115 men and women who survived the explosion itself, many of whom, like Stephen Stone, suffer from post-traumatic stress. "It's not over," his wife, Sara, told me in December. "These are not incidents that happen and have an ending."

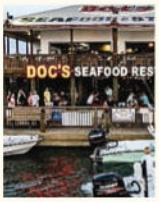
That's precisely the trouble with the situation in the Gulf. BP will someday move on, but scientists are likely to remain busy for decades to come. How the Gulf will look in 20 years is anyone's guess.

Over the past few years, I've caught glimpses of the achingly beautiful Gulf of my childhood, and I've found myself in awe of its resilience. But I can't shake the fear that some unseen danger is still out there threatening to upset the balance.

"You can't put the Gulf in an MRI and find specific problems in an ecosystem this diverse and complex," says Chris Reddy. "We're going to have to live with large uncertainties for a very long time." *O*

RECOVERY MEALS

OYSTER HARVESTS ARE WAY DOWN, AND OTHER POPULATIONS ARE STILL RECOVERING, BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU CAN'T FIND GOOD SEAFOOD. "THERE'S LESS OF IT, SO IT'S MORE EXPENSIVE, BUT THE QUALITY IS VERY HIGH," SAYS JAMES BEARD AWARD–WINNING CHEF JOHN BESH. WHERE TO START? HERE ARE HIS RECOMMENDATIONS. —MARTIN FRITZ HUBER



DOC'S SEAFOOD AND STEAKS
CORPUS CHRISTI, TEXAS
THE ORDER: Black drum with roasted crawfish and poblano cream sauce



THE GRAND MARLIN
PENSACOLA BEACH, FLORIDA
THE ORDER: Grouper picatta with whipped potatoes and sautéed spinach



MIDDENDORF'S SEAFOOD
AKERS, LOUISIANA
THE ORDER: Middendorf's Special—thin fried catfish



MARKET BY THE BAY
DAPHNE, ALABAMA
THE ORDER: Large seafood platter, with shrimp, oysters, and fish. Get a side of hush puppies, too.



CASAMENTO'S
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA
THE ORDER: Oyster loaf—pan bread, butter, and oysters

FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF DOC'S SEAFOOD AND STEAKS; COURTESY OF THE GRAND MARLIN; MICHAEL MOHR/REDUX; AL.COM/LANDOV; JUSTIN BOLOIS


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BODYWORK 04.15

Head Case

HOW ONE TEAM IS LEADING PRO CYCLING OUT OF THE BRAIN-INJURY DARK AGES—AND PROVIDING A POTENTIAL ROAD MAP FOR THE NFL

by Aaron Gulley

IF YOU WANT a snapshot of the way head injuries were treated in professional cycling until very recently, start with the viral images of Chris Horner at the 2011 Tour de France. After the American cyclist crashed toward the end of Stage 7 and was knocked out cold, he climbed back onto his bicycle, despite displaying clear signs of the disorientation caused by a severe concussion. At the finish line 15 miles later, television cameras captured Horner's bewilderment. "I don't understand," he stammered as he rolled in. "Where am I? When did I crash? I don't remember." Horner, who was forced to drop out of the race, suffered from dizziness and confusion for months. To this day, he has no memory of the 24 hours surrounding the crash.

Photographs by HANNAH MCCAUGHEY

How have things changed? In 2014, the UnitedHealthcare pro cycling team developed a new cognitive analysis that utilizes baseline testing done on its athletes throughout the season. (See "How Many Fingers?" below.) The team's post-crash practice changed after team doctors pulled UHC star sprinter Kiel Reijnen from a race following a crash. The ad hoc nature of the assessment left Reijnen angry and the doctors searching for a less subjective procedure.

The new protocol replaces the laborious SCAT3 sideline exam used in other sports, which largely results in a judgment call by an on-site health professional. The theory is that the new test eliminates most of the guesswork of whether a rider should be removed from competition. Had Horner been put through the UHC protocol, he'd likely never have ridden the final 15 miles.

"Nobody wants to take out your star quarterback," says Michael Roshon, UHC team physician. "But given everything we're starting to learn about traumatic brain injuries, this has to be a medical decision, not a business one."

In the past few years, a national spotlight has been turned on traumatic brain injuries, focused largely on a lawsuit brought by retired football players against the NFL for concealing the sport's dangers. Less known are the incidence rates of serious head injuries in adventure sports, including those that took the life of freeskier Sarah Burke in 2012 and nearly killed snowboarder Kevin Pearce. Dangerous crashes are also a routine part of road cycling and mountain biking. UHC's program is just one example of a growing desire within many of these sports to take serious steps to mitigate the damage.

"Everyone is looking at ways to diagnose injuries quicker and more accurately," says Rob Wesson, senior director of research and design at Giro, which has built helmets for cyclists and skiers for 30 years. This year, Giro, along with more than a dozen other helmet brands, invested in a technology called MIPS (multidirectional impact protection system) that is designed to reduce rotational forces on the brain, thereby minimizing the risk of concussion. Still, helmets will likely never prevent concussions entirely, which makes the decision over how to handle injured athletes critical.

Currently, the U.S. Ski and Snowboard Association, along with the NFL, NHL, and MLB, use a computerized neuropsychological test called ImPACT, which was developed by Dr. Mark Lovell, former director of the Sports Medicine Concussion Program at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. ImPACT gauges memory and reaction time and is considered the gold standard in the industry, but it takes 30 minutes and must be administered in a quiet room. "It measures fine gradations of cognitive functioning," says Lovell, who has been studying concussions since his work with the Pittsburgh Steelers in the mid-eighties. "It's not appropriate for return-to-play decisions." That means a sideline diagnosis is typically made with the slightly less time-consuming, pencil-and-paper SCAT3 test. "It's the best we have," says Dr. Julian Bailes, chairman and neurosurgeon at Chicago's North Shore Neurological Institute, who has consulted with the NFL Players Association.

"In professional cycling, if you can't make a decision in under five minutes, your day is over," says Roshon. That's why UHC made its protocol quick and simple enough to administer in the press of a race. "It always comes down to a judgment," he says, "but these tests, and especially the comparisons to an individual's normal results, help us make the decision less subjective."

Of course, no one considers the new program foolproof. "It's a good start. But remember that these tests aren't official," says Dr. Anna Abramson, an internal-medicine physician at the University of California at San Francisco and cochair of Medicine of Cycling, which is pushing for higher care standards in road racing. "There is some evidence behind them, but there isn't a lot of data. Many questions remain about how the brain reacts when it is injured."

Lovell underscores the point: "It's a very tricky injury to diagnose. Chemical changes in the brain from an impact can take up to 12 hours to manifest. Our advice is always: When in doubt, sit them out."

Roshon is undeterred. He hopes that someday UHC's diagnostic test, or something like it, could become a standard procedure everywhere from the Tour de France to the NFL sidelines. But for now, he's just happy to have a tool that he trusts to protect his riders. "The priority," says Roshon, "must always be the athlete's health." *O*



How Many Fingers?

An in-depth look at how UnitedHealthcare's protocol helps identify traumatic brain injuries in the field —A.G.

BEFORE RACING SEASON BEGINS

A team physician conducts this series of tests three times to establish a baseline.

Step 1: Balance

>The athlete stands with both feet on the ground, with eyes closed, for 20 seconds. Each balance correction is noted.
>The test is repeated on a single, dominant foot.
>A final, one-legged test is run on a soft surface like grass, carpet, or a foam pad.

Step 2: Cognition

>The physician tells the athlete a list of five words: banana, golf ball, pillow, coffee, feather. After the next two tests, the athlete attempts to recall the list. Accuracy is measured.
>The athlete is given a series of five or six numbers. The physician then records how long it takes to repeat the series backward.
>An iPad app like MindMetrics ($3; proactivelife.org) or BestTime! (free; nanotalons.com) is used to calculate reaction speed.

WHEN AN INJURY IS SUSPECTED

The physician asks a series of orienting questions—name, birth date, home address. If the athlete doesn't know the answers, or recalling them is difficult, the test is over; he or she has failed. Next, the doctor asks if the athlete feels tired, dizzy, agitated, or sensitive to bright light. Finally, the balance and cognition tests are run and the results compared with the baseline. A decrease in performance in one or more of the tests could indicate a brain injury, resulting in the athlete's removal from the competition.

Charge!

NEW TECH FOR MORE INFORMED—AND MORE FUN—TRAINING

by Brent Rose



A. Sony's **SmartWatch 3** ($250; sonymobile.com) is the first with built-in GPS, so you can leave your phone at home and still utilize all your running apps. A rubber strap instead of the usual leather stands up to sweat and the elements. Android only.

B. Plenty of companies use silver to kill bacteria on running apparel, but most spray their clothes with a compound that can wash out after a few rinse cycles. **Lululemon**'s **Ultimate No Show Run socks** ($18; lululemon.com) are made with silver thread, so you'll stay funk-free longer.

C. Studies show that a little post-exercise muscle therapy helps you bounce back more quickly. **Hyperice**'s **Vyper foam roller** ($200; hyperice.com)takes it a step further by adding a motor for a vibrating massage.

D. Garmin's **Fenix 3 GPS watch** (from $300; garmin.com) combines the step-cadence and VO_2-max measurements of the company's multisport model with the advanced navigation features of its trekker. Two satellite receivers give you a fast and accurate signal, and the Virtual Racer lets you download routes before you head out the door.

E. Research shows that music boosts performance during interval training. But unless you're prepared to strap a boom box to your back, you'll need a solid set of headphones that stay put during high-intensity output. The **Sennheiser PMX 686G Sport earphones** ($110; en-us.sennheiser.com) wrap snugly around your head and, at 0.8 ounces, don't feel bulky.

F. Fitbit's **Surge** ($250; fitbit.com) combines a 24-hour fitness tracker, for metrics like sleep and nutrition, with GPS and a heart-rate monitor, so you can analyze trends in your health and training all day long from a single device.

The Best Streaming Service You Didn't Know You Needed —B.R.
Shell out $10 per month for YouTube's Music Key and you get ad-free streaming, offline and background playback (which means songs run even when your phone is locked), and access to Google Play's 30-million-strong library. Bonus: the millions of rare remixes, bootlegs, and historical curiosities you simply can't get anywhere else besides YouTube—like Stevie Wonder's 1973 performance of "Superstition" on *Sesame Street*.



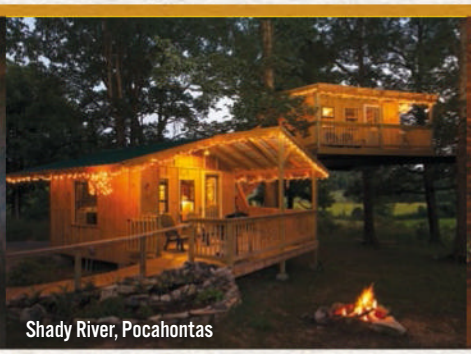
Longbow Resort, Prim

Mountain cabins, lake cabins, river cabins, cabins in the woods... we got 'em. And if you prefer some other accommodation, we have a resort built around a waterfall. Dude ranches that rival anything in the West. Houseboats you can pilot yourself. And plenty of sophisticated high-class hotels. Pretty cool, huh? ORDER YOUR FREE VACATION PLANNING KIT AT ARKANSAS.COM OR CALL 1-800-NATURAL.

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Oak Crest Cottages and Treehouses, Eureka Springs



Shady River, Pocahontas



Horseshoe Canyon Ranch, Jasper



THE *OUTSIDE* FITNESS COACH

Q: Does exercise make me crave healthier food?

A: Absolutely—at least in the short term, if you work out hard. Immediately after an intense 60-minute bout of exercise, our brains prefer lower-calorie fare like fruit and veggies to calorie-dense stuff like burgers and cake. That's because hard exercise dehydrates you, says appetite researcher Daniel Crabtree, and fruits and veggies are loaded with water. Moderate to intense exercise also suppresses the appetite-stimulating hormone ghrelin for up to a few hours. "But as time goes on," says Crabtree, "it comes back up again, and you'll see a rebound in hunger."

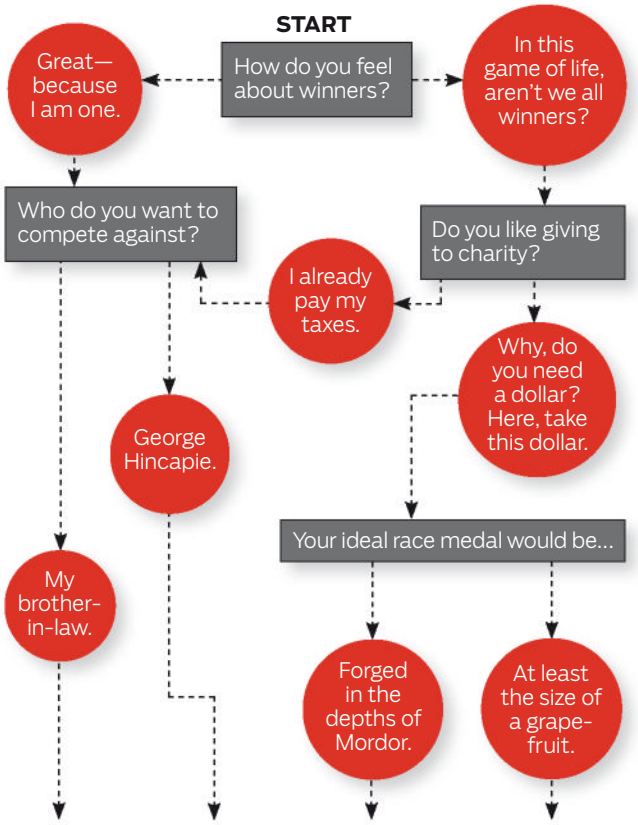
In the long run, it's possible that regular exercise could change your brain, leading to more permanent healthy-food cravings. Researchers at the University of Colorado found that people who exercised 40 to 60 minutes at 75 percent of their VO_2 max daily for six months had "reduced activation in the area of the brain that regulates reward in response to images of food," Crabtree says. Scientists are currently studying whether different intensities and durations of exercise will have similar effects.

So while you shouldn't count on exercise alone to make you a healthy eater, it'll certainly give you a boost. —ERIN BERESINI



RACING BY YOURSELF (BUT NOT ALONE)

SINCE STRAVA CHALLENGES LAUNCHED IN 2011, THERE'S BEEN A BOOM IN VIRTUAL RACING. WHY? BECAUSE IT LETS YOU COMPETE ANYTIME AND ANYWHERE. HERE'S HOW TO DECIDE WHICH EVENT IS RIGHT FOR YOU. —E.B.



Nike+
Create your own event, challenge up to 50 friends, and cheer each other on via group chats. Also nice: users get training tips from some of Nike's top athletes. Free; nikeplus.nike.com

Strava Challenges
Each month, more than 100,000 cyclists and runners compete in events conceived by Strava. Winning is a long shot, but the street cred you get from being anywhere near the top is gold. Free; strava.com/challenges

Nerd Herd
Finish the assigned mileage—from 5K to a half-marathon—during the allotted week and get your medal. There are no losers, and half the entry fee goes to Stupidcancer.org. $25; thenerdherd.info

Full Medal Racing
Similar to Nerd Herd, except you get 30 to 60 days to complete the race. A minimum of 20 percent of net profits goes to charities like the American Heart Association. From $15; fullmedalruns.bigcartel.com

SODIUM FINISH

IS SALT THE NEXT GREAT RECOVERY TOOL?

For centuries, Europeans have used salt therapy to treat respiratory problems. By inhaling salty air—either in salt caves or in artificially salt-filled rooms—you remove mucus that clogs your airways. Recently, in the U.S., the treatment has been focused on people looking for an athletic edge. "If you can breathe better, you can perform better," says Gary Patrick, CEO of Breathe Easy, one of over 100 clinics that offer 45-minute sessions in a room infused with salt microparticles.

Some athletes also point to the anti-inflammatory properties of the treatment. But Robert McElroy, a naturopath in Washington and a former Ironman triathlete, sees another benefit. "For the type A athlete," McElroy says, "it's almost more helpful in the way that it just makes you sit there and relax."

FROM TOP: ALI ENGIN/GALLERY STOCK; SIMON SCARBORO/STOCKFOOD

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Just Add Water?

WELCOME TO PHASE TWO OF THE SMOOTHIE CRAZE: EVERY SUPPLEMENT IS NOW AVAILABLE IN POWDER FORM

by Will Dietrich-Egensteiner

Just because you're traveling doesn't mean you have to downgrade your diet. **Aloha**'s **Daily Good Greens** ($19 for six servings; aloha.com) contains two helpings of fruits and vegetables, including moringa, one of the planet's most nutrient-dense foods, and spirulina for your protein fix.

Turmeric is a natural anti-inflammatory, thanks to the antioxidant curcumin, which blocks the molecules related to chronic swelling. **MegaFood**'s **Daily Turmeric Nutrient Booster Powder** ($20 for 30 servings; megafood.com) mixes easily into a smoothie and doesn't make it taste like, well, turmeric.

The raisins, eggplant, and other fruits and veggies that make up **Health Kismet**'s **Purple Dragon** ($40 for 30 servings; healthkismet.com) are high in anthocyanins, which control blood-sugar levels and assist cognitive function.

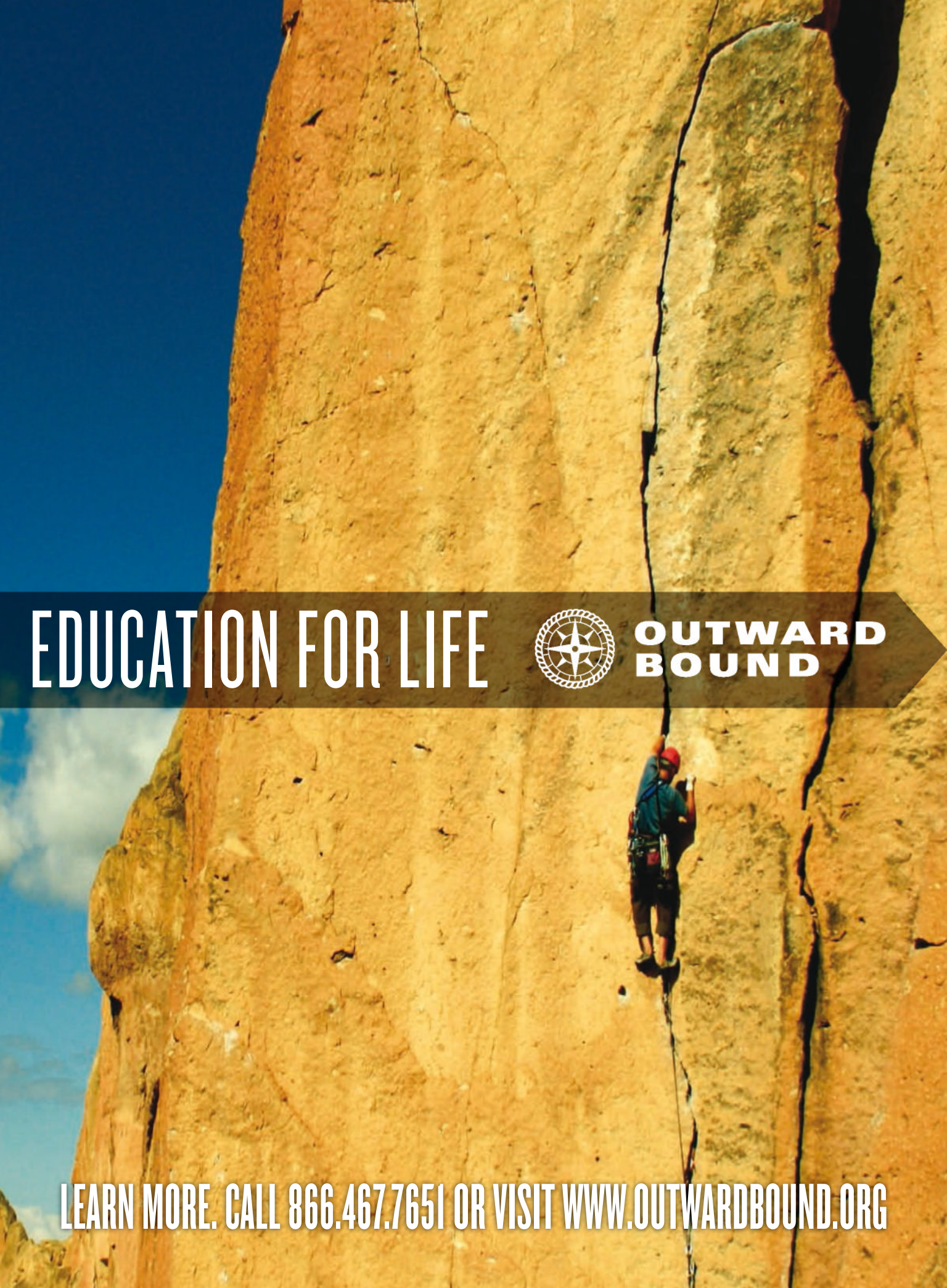
Why eat blueberries in powder form? Because they don't pack well and they're expensive when they aren't in season. **Arctic Power Berries Blueberry Powder** ($12 for ten servings; arcticpowerberries.com) crushes more than a pound of them into each 50-gram bag.

Nuun's **All Day Hydration** ($30 for 60 servings; nuun.com) adds vitamins A through E to your water, and not a single gram of sugar.

Studies have shown that the nitric oxide in beets can increase stamina during exercise. But eating enough of them on race day? No fun. **Neogenis Sport BeetElite** ($30 for ten servings; neogenissport.com) promises the boost without the GI distress; each packet contains the nutrients of six beets.

GET YOURS CUSTOM-MADE

WellPath ($65 per month; gowellpath.com) is like a bespoke tailor. The company determines your specific deficiencies via an exhaustive questionnaire, then mixes up a special batch and mails it to you. The nutrition label can get encyclopedic, but the powder comes in simple chocolate or vanilla.


EDUCATION FOR LIFE
OUTWARD BOUND
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It's time.
MONTANA
View from Swiftcurrent Mountain | VISITMT.COM

What are you waiting for?

Montana has always been a dream for you, a place for adventures you think you should be having. A place that's still real—big, open, wild land spread between Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks. Here, you can hike and bike empty trails, venture into vast wilds, catch grip-and-grin trout and sip local craft whiskey. So why are you waiting? This adventure is within reach. All you have to do is plan a visit.





Sunset over Missoula, Montana

Cycle to the Sun

Headed to Western Montana's Glacier Country? Bring your bike. Glacier National Park's Going-to-the-Sun Road is the most spectacular paved road tour in the Lower 48. And that's just the beginning when it comes to two-wheel excitement. Mountain biking is the highlight at Whitefish Mountain Resort, where you can play on 30 miles of downhill and cross-country mountain bike trails. Plus, the nearby Whitefish Trail is home to 26 miles of mixed-use trails. Altogether, they provide an impressive network of trails for riders of every level to experience the Crown of the Continent from the saddle.

GlacierMT.com/Out

Adventure in the City

The heart of Glacier Country is not in the wilderness. It's the happening college town of Missoula, a place where outdoor sports and urban culture converge. Right in town, you can paddle surf Brennan's Wave or wet a line in the Clark Fork. When it's time to hit the town, shed the waders and wetsuit and check out the scene at over 47 live music venues and a wide range of museums. Or satisfy your hunger for food and drink at the city's craft breweries, distilleries and farm-to-table restaurants.

DestinationMissoula.org/Outside

Paddle the Plains

You can't escape the waters of the Missouri River when you explore Central Montana. But why would you want to? You will feel like a modern-day Lewis and Clark when you paddle out into this still, calm expanse. Trace the route of those first explorers in a canoe or kayak. Rent one from one of the local shops, like the Missouri River Canoe Company, located in a restored homestead-era settlement in a remote spot adjoining the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument. Or take it off course and hike the stunning geological formations.

CentralMontana.com

Step Back in Time

All you have to do is pull off the interstate to get lost in Southeastern Montana's secrets. When the crowds drive straight to Yellowstone or Glacier National Parks, they miss out on secrets like the Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, where you can hike up into spots you will only share with your echo. Or wander on The Calypso Trail, which explores petrified natural bridges spanning over canyon walls deep in the Terry Badlands. And don't miss deep-rooted cultural happenings like the Crow Fair, Parade and Rodeo.

SoutheastMontana.com



Missouri River Breaks



Annual Crow Fair and Rodeo



Big Horn Canyon National Recreation Area

Roam the Trails

This Montana town with deep roots has transformed into an outdoor playground that's not overrun. There's plenty of room to breathe on the hiking and biking trails in the four million acres of public land surrounding the city. These are not just any trails: Adventure Cycling's Great Divide Mountain Bike Route follows the Continental Divide through Butte and brings riders out of the wilderness and into town. Riders can rub elbows with locals at breweries like the Quarry Brewing Company or sip on handcrafted liquor at Headframe Spirits Distillery.

ButteCVB.com

Feel at Home

Montana's capital is a laid-back adventure town, with the famed waterways of the Missouri River right out the door and 75 miles of trails that start just beyond the city streets. But it's the community that makes this town. Helena's so cycle friendly it's been designated an International Mountain Bicycling Association Ride Center. It's the type of place where dogs are welcome, the streets are filled with bike commuters and you can strike up a conversation over a craft beer at Blackfoot River Brewing or Lewis & Clark Brewing Company. It will feel like home when you visit.

HelenaMT.com



Continental Divide Trail near Butte, Montana



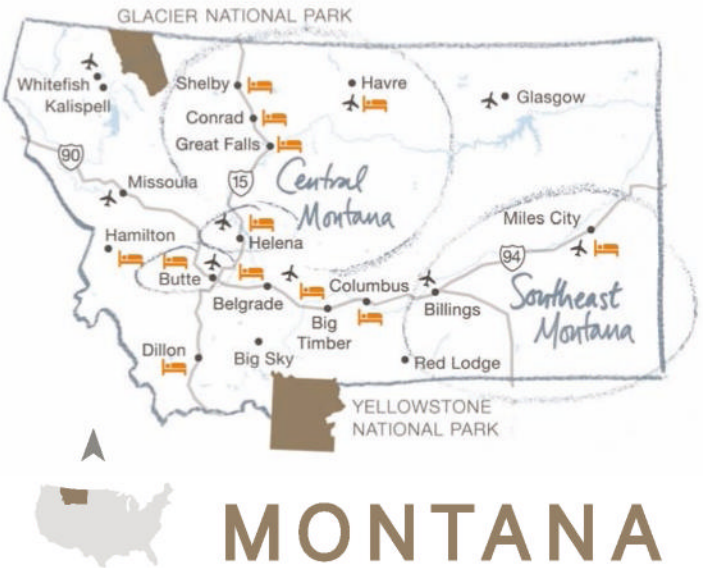
Sunset over historic downtown Helena, Montana

Your Basecamp for Adventure

The Town Pump Hotel Group prides itself on the philosophy of serving and reinvesting in the local community, and has grown to include a wide range of stops adventurers need. The Town Pump Hotel Group consists of seven trusted brands in the midst of adventure hot spots that make ideal basecamps.

Town Pump Hotel Group locations

GAS MONEY
Stay at one of these locations and receive a **$25 gas card** for your Montana road trip. Find out how at **townpumphotels.com**





ONE DIR



2015 BEST of TRAVEL
OUTSIDE

Who made the cut in our annual selection of the Best of Travel? All roads lead to our winners: the coolest mountains to climb, food to eat, bags to tote, passport stamps to acquire, rivers to float, guides to hire, beaches to lounge on, lodges to luxuriate in, and all the other beta you need to explore the globe this year.

BY TIM NEVILLE AND STEPHANIE PEARSON

ECTION

2015 BEST of TRAVEL OUTSIDE


A cove in Bermuda


Bermuda bungalows


Beer-battered Monte Cristo, Austin

1. BEST ISLAND
Bermuda

A subtropical archipelago of 181 volcanic islands, Bermuda won the bid to host the 2017 America's Cup, thanks to near perfect North Atlantic sailing conditions. Beyond wind, the British Overseas Territory, just a two-hour flight from New York City, has 75 miles of pink-sand beaches interspersed with jagged limestone cliffs, many of which are perfect for deep-water soloing and hucking into the Atlantic from the top. Stay at Elbow Beach, a 50-acre hideaway with a private stretch of sand on the southern shore (from $455; elbowbeach bermuda.com).

2. BEST DIVE
Cuba

Already sanctioned by the U.S. Treasury Department as an educational tour, this 11-day liveaboard yacht excursion helps fund research and conservation work by trip leader David Guggenheim, a marine scientist, underwater explorer, and founder of the Washington, D.C., nonprofit Ocean Doctor. The location: Gardens of the Queen National Park, an archipelago of 250 coral and mangrove islands, located 60 miles off Cuba's southern coast, that Fidel Castro established as a marine protected area and a no-take fishing zone. Only 1,000 divers are allowed each year, so you'll be one of the few to see whale sharks, sperm whales, sea turtles, goliath groupers, and some of the most pristine coral reefs anywhere on the planet. The package includes a chartered flight from Miami and a night at the five-star Hotel Parque Central in Havana. From $7,474; oceandoctor.org

3. BEST STREET FOOD
Austin, Texas

The scene here is so fast-paced that today's sweet chile chicken lollipops at Tommy Want Wingy or kimchi fries at the Korean-Mexican fusion truck Chi'Lantro may be gone tomorrow. (Though we sure hope not.) Hit eight trucks in one location at the Barton Springs Picnic Park, and find more worth seeking out at AustinFoodCarts.com and FoodTrailersAustin.com.

4. BEST RIVER TRIP
Fiji

Lined with vertical cliffs and cascading waterfalls, the 18-mile-long Upper Navua River Gorge on Viti Levu is like a tropical Grand Canyon, which is why OARS formed Rivers Fiji and worked with local landowners, villagers, a timber company, and the Native Land Trust Board to establish the 10.5-mile Upper Navua Conservation Area in 2000. Bask in the fruits of their labor by paddling this pristine Class II–III warm-water river lined with swaying palms. As long as you're here, add a couple of days kayaking the Middle Navua, sea-kayaking and snorkeling among the coral gardens of Beqa Lagoon, and sprawling out on white-sand beaches. $2,899 for eight days; oars.com

5. BEST OF THE WILD WEST
Montana

Since 2001, the nonprofit American Prairie

6. BEST PORTABLE PARTY-STARTER
Fugoo Sport

Sand and mud don't play nice with electronics. Enter the Fugoo Sport Bluetooth speaker. It's water- and drop-proof, and the battery lasts up to 40 hours on a charge. $200; fugoo.com

Picking our winners was difficult. To see more nominees for the best adventure hubs and other categories, go to **outside.com/bestoftravel**.

PREVIOUS PAGES: ANDERS OVERGAARD/TRUNK ARCHIVE. THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: STEPHEN WOLF/GETTY; GAVIN HELLIER/GETTY; MATTHEW JOHNSON.



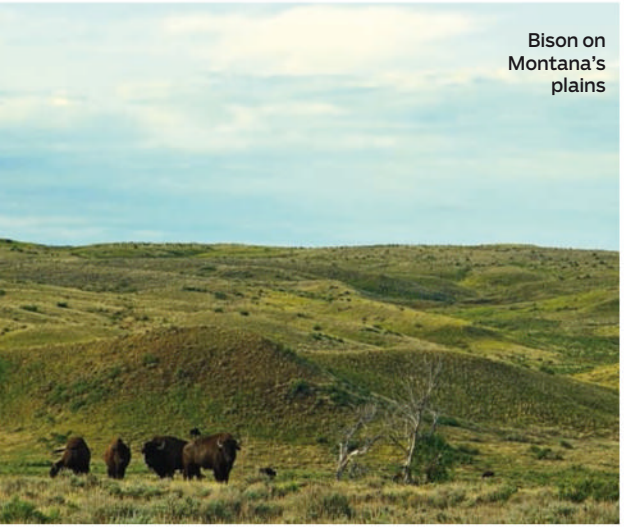
HEMP

Hemp is one of nature's most durable and low-impact fibers. It requires little water or fertilizer and needs no herbicides or pesticides. Hemp grows quickly and can be replanted and harvested several times a year. Its cultivation improves the health of degraded soil and rotates well with food crops. We've used it since 1997. Learn more and see all of our hemp products online. **patagonia.com/hemp**

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2015 BEST of TRAVEL OUTSIDE

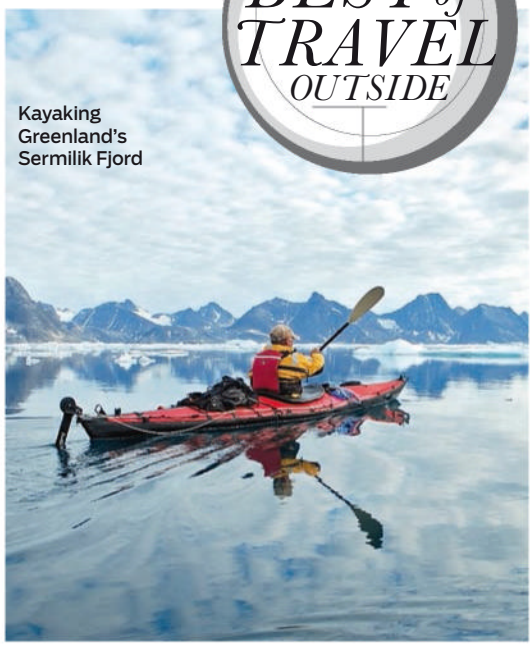


Bison on Montana's plains

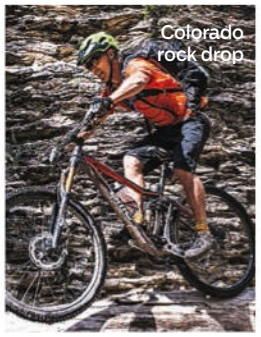
Reserve has been working to restore the northern great plains to the pristine condition Lewis and Clark found them in more than 200 years ago. The resulting reserve, in northeast Montana, is now 305,000 acres. The aim is to reach 3.5 million by 2030, creating a U.S. Serengeti and the largest wildlife park in the lower 48, where herds of elk, mule deer, and bison thrive. But don't wait to go. You can sleep under the stars now at the 11-site Buffalo Camp ($10; americanprairie.org), four miles north of the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, and take a DIY mountain-biking safari on old ranch roads, passing grazing bison and scanning the skies for American kestrels, Sprague's pipits, and Swainson's hawks. Or paddle the Missouri River past pioneer homesteads and historic tepees to Kestrel Camp, a set of five luxurious yurts, each with AC, a hot shower, and a veranda for sundowners (from $4,800 for six days; absolutetravel.com).

7. BEST PLACE TO TIE ONE ON
Portland, Maine

The other Portland may have the microbrewery rep, but it distributes its beers to half the country. Many of the best brews in Portland, Maine, can only be quaffed here. Oxbow, a classic American farmhouse brewery, just opened a tasting room downtown where you can try local favorite Space Cowboy, a low-alcohol ale, and full-flavor European-style beers like the Continental. Then head to Novare Res, one of the country's best beer bars, with 33 rotating taps, including roughly ten Maine brews. Or join Summer Feet Cycling, which offers two-and-a-half-hour tours along the Old Port area, with stops at distilleries and breweries like Rising Tide and Urban Farm Fermenting (from $59; summerfeet.net).



Kayaking Greenland's Sermilik Fjord



Colorado rock drop

8. BEST SPLURGE
Greenland

Natural Habitat Adventures' brand-new eco base camp, with high-thread-count linens, hot showers, and a gourmet chef, is as close to a luxurious safari-style camp as you can get in these parts. Set on Sermilik Fjord at the edge of the Greenland Ice Sheet, one of the least explored regions of the Arctic, the camp is within view of 5,000-foot peaks that plunge into the sea. Why pay top dollar to sleep in polar bear country in temperatures that barely

9. BEST WAY TO GET STRONG QUADS
San Juan Mountains, Colorado

Elevation, elevation, elevation. That's what I recall about the seven-day hut-to-hut mountain-biking trip through the San Juans, from Durango, Colorado, to Moab, Utah. Much as I want to write about the towering vistas and cascading ribbons of singletrack, you have to reach them first, and my memory of the 200-plus-mile ride is the 25,000 feet of elevation gain. The pain is worth it, with climbs ending at huts with glorious views. Note that these aren't your gorgeous, timber-pegged cabins—they're two-by-four-and-particle-board huts, hauled up on trailer frames. But you're not here for raclette and a hot-stone massage; you're just happy that you don't have to carry your own food, water, and shelter. The cabins are well stocked, including cold beer and a warm sleeping bag on a soft pad. A couple of suggestions: carry the hut system's maps; where it says singletrack option, take it; and read the log books (some of the comments are hysterical). When you get to Geyser Pass Hut at the end of day six, start smiling, because you're at the top of the La Sal Mountains, and a 7,400-foot descent, aptly named the Whole Enchilada, awaits. As do the Colorado River, Moab, and a Milt's malted and cheeseburger. sanjuanhuts.com —DAVE COX



10. BEST GUIDE: CYCLING
Arien Torsius

DUVINE CYCLING AND ADVENTURE CO.

TURF: Holland, Spain, Italy
CRED: Torsius, 27, grew up in "middle of nowhere" South Africa but still managed to develop a passion for cycling. At 18, she turned pro, competing in France's Grand Boucle Féminine Internationale (the women's Tour de France), Italy's Giro Donne, and "every race that's horrid and tough," she says. She retired from racing five years ago and has been guiding ever since. These days, Torsius understands that not every ride has to be a hammerfest. She's trained as a masseuse and counts her wine opener as one of her most important tools. "In the Piedmont region, my co-guide is a winemaker," she says.
BEST KNOWN FOR: Trips that follow iconic cycling routes like the Giro d'Italia.
NEVER LEAVES HOME WITHOUT: "A South African herbal gel called Iceman. It's a product for horses, but it's really good for muscle aches."
BOOK HER: duvine.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: RANDY BEACHAM; OLAF MALVER/NATURAL HABITAT ADVENTURES; DAVE COX

Illustrations by DANILO AGUTOLI



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2015 BEST of TRAVEL OUTSIDE



11. THE BEST NEW JAW-DROPPING HOTEL

Alila Jabal Akhdar, Oman

Oman is one of the most peaceful and stunning nations in the Middle East. Start your exploration of the vast Arabian Peninsula at this luxurious oasis amid date, peach, and pomegranate trees, perched at 6,500 feet on the edge of a deep gorge in the Hajar Mountains. From $325; alilahotels.com

Canyon view from the pool



Lunch al fresco

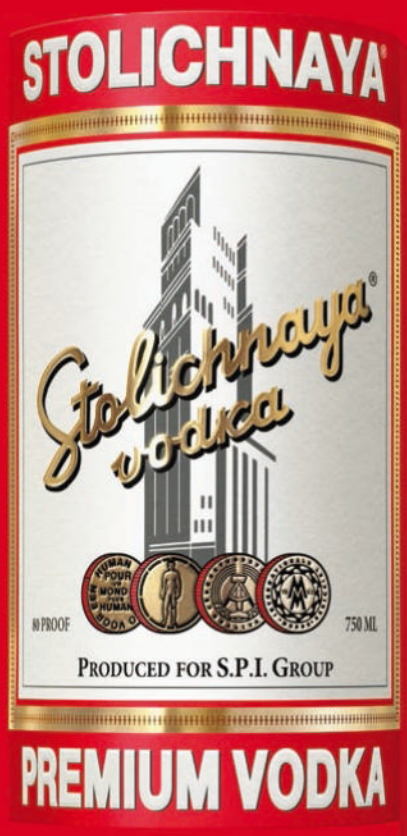
COURTESY OF ALILA JABAL AKHDAR (2)

A VODKA TRAVELS.

THE VODKA EXPLORES.







Stoli

THE VODKA

SAVOR STOLI® RESPONSIBLY. Stolichnaya® Premium Vodka. 40% Alc/Vol. (80 proof).
Distilled from Russian Grain. Stoli Group USA, LLC, New York, NY ©2015 Spirits International, B.V.

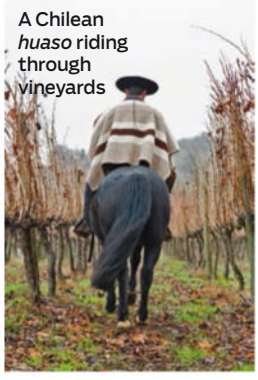
2015 BEST of TRAVEL OUTSIDE



Chile's Torres del Paine National Park



Soft sand and clear water in Belize



A Chilean *huaso* riding through vineyards

hit the fifties in August? Because as Olaf Malver, the Danish camp founder who has spent 26 years exploring this coastline, says, "You will be dazzled by its dizzying beauty, strength, and simmering silence." Guests can take guided ten-mile hikes through tundras, kayak among humpback whales, and visit Inuit villagers who live by centuries-old traditions. From $8,995 for nine days; nathab.com



Modern digs at Chile's Tierra Atacama

12. BEST INTERNATIONAL ADVENTURE HUB

Chile

Running 2,610 miles north to south, Chile is the longest country in the world, and 80 percent of it is covered by mountains. With vast wild spaces like 650,000-acre Patagonia National Park (which opened to the public this year), pristine rivers with big trout, classic old-school ski areas, and pisco sours and damn good wine, it's hard to go wrong. Consider these dream itineraries: (1) Fly into the capital city of Santiago, then work your way south to 370,000-acre Yendegaia National Park in Tierra del Fuego. The former cattle ranch opened in 2013, but very few people have been lucky enough to explore this swath of untouched glaciers and peaks. Be one of the first to take it all in on a 16-day boat-assisted hiking and sailing epic with Chile Nativo ($8,000; chilenativo.travel). (2) Midcountry, two hours south of Santiago in the Millahue Valley, stay at the brand-new Viña Vik, a 22-room retreat and wine spa in the middle of an 11,000-acre vineyard with stunning views of the Andes (from $1,200; vikhotels.com). Mountain-bike the 65 miles of vineyard roads, then laze by the infinity pool. (3) Eleven hundred miles north in the Atacama Desert, explore the lunar landscape on horseback, relax poolside at the luxurious Tierra Atacama (from $1,350 for two nights, all-inclusive; tierra atacama.com), then set out after dark to Ahlarkapin Observatory to view the universe through the clearest sky on earth.

13. BEST SUP ODYSSEY

Belize

With the 180-mile-long Belize Barrier Reef, this laid-back country has long been a heaven for divers and snorkelers. It just got better with the world's first lodge-to-lodge paddleboarding trip. On this guided adventure through Belize's 118,000-acre Southwater Caye Marine Reserve, you'll paddle four to eight miles per day through calm turquoise waters, jumping off to snorkel

14. BEST CAMERA FOR STICKY SITUATIONS



GoPro Hero4 Black

When you don't want to risk wrecking your phone or DSLR, whip this out to shoot top-shelf stills and video. $500; gopro.com



15. BEST CAMERA FOR MAKING YOUR PHOTO A WORK OF ART

Sony Alpha 7 II

DSLRs are bulky, and cell-phone images don't always print well. The Sony Alpha 7 II's do, and the full-frame, 24-megapixel shooter is only about half as heavy as a DSLR. $1,700; sony.net

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JAY GOODRICH/TANDEM STOCK; TONY RATH; MICHAEL TUREK/GALLERY STOCK; VALENTINA TAGLE

TRAVELTEX.COM > THINGS TO DO > OUTDOOR

TAKE A HIKE

HELLO! HELLO! HELLO! HELLO! HELLO!

CAMP SITES

MOUNTAIN BIKING

CLIMB TEXAS

FABULOUS FLORA

GRAB A PADDLE

FAMILY FUN

BIRD SPOTTING

CAVERNS & CANYONS

MONUMENTAL PARKS

THE ONLY THINGS

BIGGER

THAN THE PANORAMIC VISTAS
ARE THE MONUMENTAL

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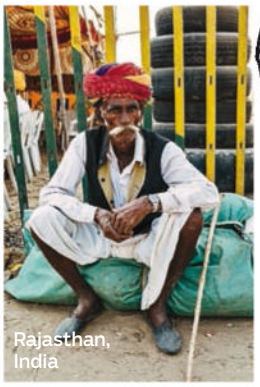
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Himalayan switchbacks


Rajasthan, India


A mural in Udaipur


Moulton on Doubtful Sound

where spotted eagle rays and barracuda glide in reef areas too shallow for motorboats. You'll visit with researchers at Smithsonian's Carrie Bow Caye Field Station to learn about reef biology, stop for a beachside fresh-catch lunch at a Garifuna fishing camp, night-snorkel at Southwater Cut (a deep channel where the coral blooms after dark), and sleep in rustic overwater bungalows on tiny Tobacco Caye and in the seclusion of private Southwater Caye, 12 acres ringed by white sand in the Belize Barrier Reef. $1,829 for six days; islandexpeditions.com

16. BEST PLACE TO GET IN THE CAR AND GO
India

Mention driving in India to veteran travelers and they'll recount white-knuckle cab rides and six-hour traffic jams. But on a ten-day driving trip with Mercury Himalayan Explorations, you and a caravan of like-minded adventurers gain access to crowd-free luxury lodging and villages far from the tourist hordes. You'll pilot a Mahindra Scorpio (an Indian four-wheel-drive SUV) up to 90 miles a day, charging through the dirt roads of the Himalayan foothills or over the sand dunes of Rajasthan. A mechanic will be right behind you for on-the-fly repairs. From $1,500 for ten days; mheadventures.com

17. BEST BEACHES
South Carolina

The Palmetto State has over 200 miles of coastline and an ample supply of gorgeous beaches, with comfortable water temperatures from May through October. Start in Charleston and head 20 miles north to uninhabited Bulls Island, part of the stunning 66,000-acre Cape Romaine

18. BEST SMALL CRUISE
Doubtful Sound, New Zealand

As my wife and I planned our South Island road trip, the big debate was: should we do an overnight cruise into Doubtful Sound on a 70-person, three-masted sailboat? We didn't really think of ourselves as cruising types. Then we looked at pictures of Doubtful Sound, which seemed too stunning to be real: ridiculously lush forest clinging to sheer cliff walls, pods of dolphins, towering waterfalls. So we booked the trip with Real Journeys. While we did some unbelievably cool stuff while we were in New Zealand, including helicoptering into a swanky lodge in the Southern Alps, the defining moment came during a rainy afternoon on that boat. Temperatures were in the mid-forties, and we had just returned from a short sea-kayaking excursion, wet and cold. But when I saw a few of my fellow cruisers (who, it should be said, were mostly young and adventuresome) lining up to jump off the rear deck, I stripped down to my skivvies, climbed onto a platform, and launched into the scrotum-searingly cold water. And then I did it again. My wife looked at me like I'd lost my mind. And maybe I had, at least temporarily. From $310; realjourneys.co.nz —SAM MOULTON



19. BEST GUIDE: RIVER
Lars Haarr

OARS

TURF: Colorado, Utah, South America
CRED: A legend among Colorado River legends, Haarr, who also guides on the Yampa, the Green, the San Juan, and rivers in South America, can be found steering a wooden dory through Cataract Canyon's Class IV Big Drops rapid at water levels as high as 83,000 cubic feet per second—while keeping his guests calm. "You don't want to overemphasize the rapids and make people so nervous they can't sleep," says 40-year-old Haarr, "but you have to explain that this is a wild roller-coaster ride that may come off the tracks." His favorite trip? "It's difficult to compare," he says, "but when you take a 16-to-18-day trip down the Colorado, it changes you."
BEST KNOWN FOR: His knowledge of the night sky, which is so extensive that OARS launched a series of Stars with Lars departures, on which he brings along a high-powered telescope and laser pointer to highlight constellations.
NEVER LEAVES HOME WITHOUT: "Nail polish. I've painted football players' and kids' toes. It's unadulterated fun."
BOOK HIM: oars.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: SCOTT CLARK/TANDEM STOCK; CHRIS SORENSEN/GALLERY STOCK; KEVIN J. MIYAZAKI/REDUX; NICOLE MOULTON

2015 BEST of TRAVEL OUTSIDE





Clockwise from left: Indian Ocean sea cliff; the pool at Cape Weligama; a tent at the Aliya Resort; Sri Lankan flower delivery





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: CEDRIC ANGELES/INTERSECTION; COURTESY OF CAPE WELIGAMA; COURTESY OF ALIYA RESORT AND SPA; CEDRIC ANGELES/GALLERY STOCK

20. BEST COMEBACK COUNTRY

Sri Lanka

The first decade of the new millennium was rough on Sri Lanka, with a devastating cyclone, the tsunami, and a 26-year civil war that ended in 2009. Today, this largely Buddhist island in the northern Indian Ocean, with 8,000-foot peaks and 830 miles of coastline, has bounced back big time—foreign travel grew 19 percent in 2014. There's no shortage of fun to be had at these base camps: Book a deluxe safari-style tent at Aliya Resort and Spa in the center of the country and hike to sacred rock Sigiriya (from $221; theme-resorts.com/aliyaresort). Cape Weligama, a brand-new clifftop hotel on 12 lush acres, 30 minutes east of the port city of Galle, hovers 100 feet over the Indian Ocean, with mountain biking, diving, and paddleboarding nearby (from $767; capeweligama.com). On the east coast, the village of Arugam Bay, sandwiched between miles of beaches and an inland tropical jungle, has consistent right breaks. Rent a beach cabana at the Stardust Beach Hotel (from $38; arugambay.com). Twenty miles south is Yala National Park, with herds of elephants and solitary leopards.

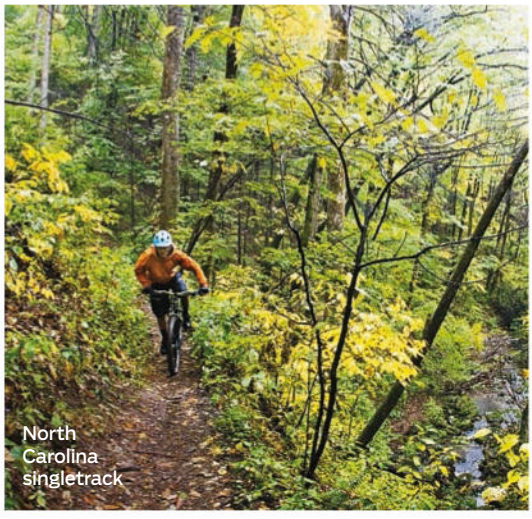
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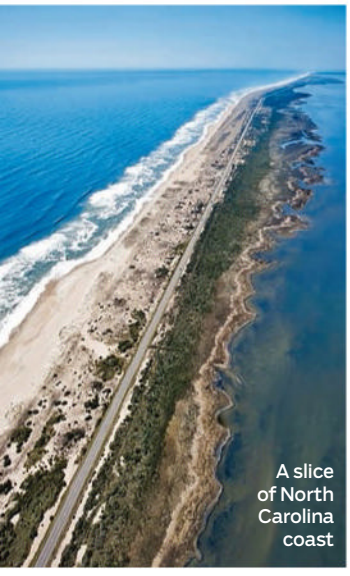
Uninhabited island, Palau



After big fish on the Outer Banks



North Carolina singletrack



A slice of North Carolina coast

National Wildlife Refuge, for a hiking or kayaking tour with Coastal Expeditions (from $40; coastalexpeditions.com). Farther north lies Pawleys Island and its laid-back beaches, and three miles north of there is our favorite stretch of the state: Litchfield Beach. The northern end is the protected Huntington Beach State Park. You won't find any putt-putt here, just wide-open white sand for miles.

21. BEST OUTFITTER

Wilderness Travel

This 37-year-old team in Berkeley, California, dreams up more than 30 unique trips across 75 countries every year and is known for pioneering adventures that other outfitters copy later—kayaking tours through remote stretches of Tierra del Fuego, the world's highest trek (at 23,000 feet) across Tibet—and doing it all with an eye toward supporting locals and minimizing environmental impact. But what makes Wilderness Travel truly exceptional are the company's trip developers and guides. Take Barbara Banks, a polyglot who's spent 23 years with the company traveling hundreds of thousands of miles setting up local connections. (Norwegian ferry captains know her so well, they'll make unscheduled stops to allow Wilderness Travel groups to disembark directly at their waterside hotel after a day of hiking fjords.) Some recent new trips: sea-kayaking and camping on isolated beaches in Palau, visiting little-seen pyramids in Sudan, and tracking desert lions in Namibia with Flip Stander, a Ph.D. who has spent decades living among the big cats. wildernesstravel.com

22. BEST DOMESTIC ADVENTURE HUB

North Carolina

Take California, make the mountains greener and the beaches and restaurants less crowded, and replace all the digital millionaires with hospitable southerners, and you get North Carolina. On the coast, you'll find some of the East's best breaks on the Outer Banks, and stand-up paddleboarders cruise through the 160,000-acre Croatan National Forest, filled with salt estuaries and flooded pines. In the west, there's world-class singletrack and road riding in the Blue Ridge mountains (pros like local Matthew Busche of Trek Factory Racing train for the Tour de France here), 96 miles of Appalachian Trail, and some of the country's best whitewater at the Nantahala Outdoor Center. That's to say nothing of cities like Asheville, Wilmington, and Chapel Hill, which are full of farm-to-table restaurants, local breweries, and great music venues. Where to start your trip? Get a room at the two-year-old Aloft hotel in Asheville (from $159; aloftasheville downtown.com) and mountain-bike the Big Avery Loop, a challenging 13-mile romp through rhododendron tunnels

23. BEST LUGGAGE

Pelican ProGear Elite

If you've ever watched suitcases get flung into a plane, you'll understand the appeal of Pelican's Elite line of luggage. Each piece is fully waterproof and can support the better part of a ton without crumpling. Baggage handlers, do your worst. From $475; pelican.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: IAN SHIVE/TANDEM STOCK; PETER FRANK EDWARDS/REDUX; DAN BARHAM; JUPITERIMAGES/GETTY



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2015 BEST of TRAVEL OUTSIDE



Dusk at Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp

and way-off-the-back rock steps. Or rent a house on the Outer Banks in the spring or fall and learn to surf with the folks at Real Watersports (from $100; realwatersports.com).

24. BEST BASE CAMP

Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp, Namibia

Yes, getting to Namibia involves at least a full day of travel, but the payoff is worth it: no other landscape is like the surreal Skeleton Coast, which was carved out of lava rock 130 million years ago. One excellent way to see it is via Hoanib Skeleton Coast Camp, a fly-in oasis that opened last August on the banks of the Hoanib River in one of Africa's most extraordinary wildlife-viewing regions. Desert-adapted rhinos, elephants, and other charismatic megafauna like springbok (a gazelle) linger near the camp's spacious, fire-warmed common area and eight luxury safari tents (think pitched canvas roofs, big decks, and twin-bed interiors). A small plane can drop you off near the shipwrecks and seal colonies at Mowe Bay. From $500; wilderness-safaris.com

25. BEST ROAD BIKING

California

The Golden State has 800 miles of coastline and half a dozen mountain ranges—and you can ride practically all of it year-round. From coastal tours like the supported eight-day, 525-mile California Coast Classic from San Francisco to Los Angeles (californiacoastclassic.org), to foodie-friendly tours along the back roads of Sonoma (visit sonomacounty.com for routes, rentals, and outfitters), to epic climbs like the five passes and 15,000 feet of elevation gain through the Sierra Nevada during the annual Death Ride ($135; deathride.com), California has greater

26. BEST PLACE FOR A MEAL IN SKI BOOTS

The Bavarian Lodge and Restaurant Taos Ski Valley, New Mexico

After a morning spent charging Taos's famously steep West Basin chutes, there's no better place to refuel than the Bavarian's festive outdoor deck. With its waitstaff in dirndls and lederhosen, German fare, and view of Kachina Peak, this ski-in, ski-out chalet is about as close to the Alps as you can get in the southern Rockies. I start with the soft-doughed pretzels and house-made sweet grain mustard. They're the perfect warm-up for the goulash, bratwurst, or spaetzle (a German version of mac and cheese) and an Asam Bock, a beer on tap from Germany's Weltenburg Monastery. On powder days, I often don't end up at the Bavarian until dinner, which is served inside the log-built lodge, where you can still dunk bread in cheese on fondue Tuesdays during the winter. If I'm sleeping in one of the Bavarian's four luxe suites, waking up to easy access to Taos's new Kachina lift, which expands the mountain's lift-served advanced terrain by 50 percent, is heaven. During summer, trails to Williams Lake and New Mexico's highest peak—13,159-foot Wheeler—are right out your door. thebavarian.com —MARY TURNER



DANA ALLEN/WILDERNESS SAFARIS

27. BEST GUIDE: SKIING

Deb Lovci

SKI UTAH INTERCONNECT TOUR

TURF: Utah
CRED: Fellow guides joke that Lovci's pack is bigger than she is. (She's five foot five and 115 pounds.) But the 53-year-old competitive Nordic skier, ski-mountaineering racer, mountain biker, and angler is no pushover when it comes to the 26-mile daylong backcountry Wasatch tour linking Deer Valley to Snowbird via four to six other resorts. "If someone will be a safety risk, I have no problem telling them this isn't the tour for them," she says. "As much as I want to make every day a holiday, safety is my number-one concern. But I have the greatest job on earth. I love standing on top of a peak and saying, 'Welcome to my office.'"
BEST KNOWN FOR: Twenty-five years of skiing the Wasatch backcountry and finding powder stashes; unstoppable energy.
NEVER LEAVES HOME WITHOUT: Snickers, an Ortovox shovel and probe, a multitool, and duct tape.
BOOK HER: skiutah.com/explore/the-interconnect-tour



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Marin-bound on the Golden Gate Bridge



Powder days in Japan just got a little cheaper



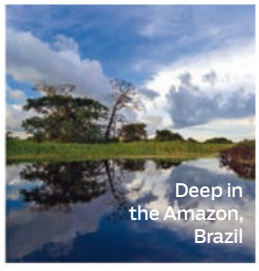
Schuylkill Banks Boardwalk, Philadelphia

variety than just about anywhere. Get route maps online at the California Bicycle Coalition (calbike.org), or sign up with an outfitter like Pure Adventures. Its supported, self-directed six-day tours from Yosemite to San Francisco or through Death Valley National Park let you decide where to ride, sleep, and eat, but a leader in a van sets up snack stops and water refills and hauls your gear. It's like an egoless, six-cylinder domestique ($1,495 for six days; pure-adventures.com).

28. BEST URBAN UPGRADE

Philadelphia

It may be better known for its cheesesteak, hoagies, and underdog sports teams, but lately the City of Brotherly Love has been gaining ground as an outdoor town. This year it's launching a bike-share program and adding three miles of multi-use trails to its 220-mile citywide system. In 2014, it transformed 20,571 square feet of cemented wasteland into Dilworth Park. You can even do paddleboard yoga along the Delaware River with Aqua Vida (from $45; aquavidasup.com).



Deep in the Amazon, Brazil

29. BEST FAMILY OUTFITTER

Bicycle Adventures

Roughly 10 percent of Bicycle Adventures' trips are now geared specifically toward families with preteens in tow. This year the Washington-based company launched three multi-day rides in Oregon, Idaho, and South Dakota that follow car-free bike paths and pass through kid-captivating areas like Mount Rushmore and Idaho's Trail of the Hiawatha, with stops for ice cream, rafting, and swimming holes. Have younger kids? They'll pedal tag-alongs hitched to adult bikes, and toddlers and infants can ride in provided trailers. From $2,295; bicycleadventures.com

30. BEST PLACE TO EAT AND DRINK YOURSELF SILLY

Scotland

A decade ago, when restaurants like Noma ushered in a Scandinavian culinary renaissance, a bunch of Scots headed north and took

31. BEST PLACES TO STRETCH YOUR BUDGET

With the economy bouncing back, the dollar is getting stronger—especially in these three destinations, where the exchange rate has steadily improved over the past 12 months.

Japan
Three nights at the ski-centric Furano Prince
FEBRUARY 2014: $260
FEBRUARY 2015: $220

Europe
One-week tour with Cycle Italia
FEBRUARY 2014: $4,000
FEBRUARY 2015: $3,395

Brazil
Three nights in the Amazon at Pousada Uacari
FEBRUARY 2014: $850
FEBRUARY 2015: $750

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: JAKE STANGEL; STEVE OGLE/GETTY; MATT ROURKE/AP/CORBIS; HARALD VON RADEBRECHT/GETTY

The Bentley





The Tropics







Club Dust is an organization that builds homes for poor families throughout Tijuana and Tecate. Rainbow's Herman Brown helps Ray Meltvedt, who is picking up sandals to distribute to families on their next mission trip.

Repair • Reuse • Recycle

In 1974, realizing surfers needed a more comfortable, long lasting sandal, I developed a "layered construction" combining improved densities of sponge rubber, 2000 lb. test nylon webbing with a parachute box-X stitch to secure the toe piece, better leather sources, and formulated my own glue to hold the layers together.

Today, our goal remains producing high-quality sandals that don't end up in landfills. That commitment doesn't end when our sandals leave the store. If your Rainbows are nearing the end of their run and are past warranty but still have some life left, please return them. We will repair and donate each pair to people who need them throughout the world.

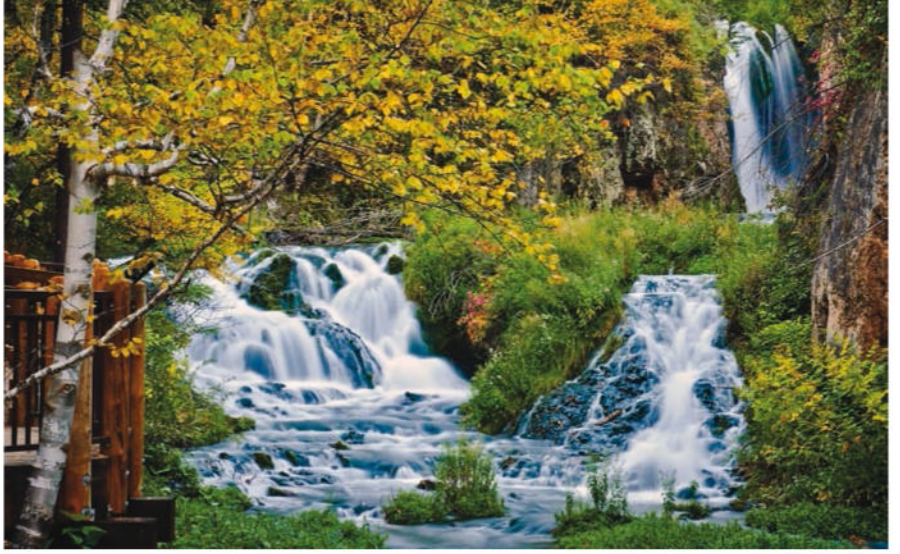
Rainbow® Sandals philosophy to Repair • Reuse • Recycle is one we hope you share too.



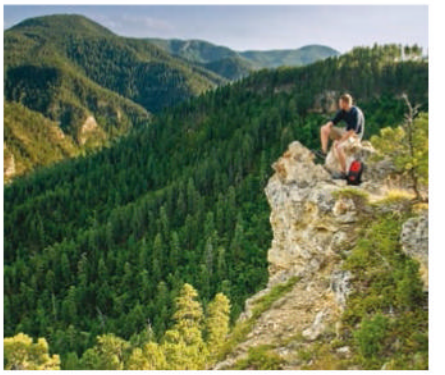
–Jay "Sparky" Longley
Founder & CEO

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QUEEN OF THE BLACK HILLS

Spearfish, South Dakota, offers all the adventure, none of the attitude



Nicknamed "the Queen City" because it sits in a valley ringed by three peaks that form a crown, Spearfish seems tectonically engineered for playing. The hub of 11,000 residents lying at the northern end of the Black Hills, halfway between Devils Tower to the northwest and Mount Rushmore to the southeast. North of town, 19-mile-long Spearfish Canyon, bisected by a creek stocked with trout, is a National Forest Scenic Byway. But unlike most cities in the midst of immense beauty and recreational opportunities, Spearfish is a place whose residents have a refreshing lack of ego. "It's a really nice town, without the scene," says Jesse Hansen, owner of Rushmore Mountain Sports.

What Hansen means is that, while the cafés, brewpubs, and restaurants here are on par with those in the hottest outdoor towns in the U.S., Spearfish is still so under the radar that you're likely to have the hiking, rock climbing, mountain biking, trout fishing, and wildlife watching to yourself.



Spearfish stands out because of its magical canyon. The narrow, 1,000-foot-high limestone cliffs, with their cascading waterfalls and hikes lined by massive ponderosa pines, were the backdrops for key scenes in the western epic *Dances with Wolves*. For a starter hike, try Devil's Bathtub, a natural pool lined by slickrock slides. Get serious with a trek up 76 Trail, part of an historic 16-mile mining path that starts near Roughlock Falls, then climbs 1,000 feet over 1.6 miles. Be on the lookout for mountain goats, mule deer, bobcats, and bald eagles. For rock climbers, Spearfish Canyon has 420 steep, technical sport routes that spider up the limestone crags, ranging in difficulty from 5.5 to 5.14. Named for the ancient Native American fishing technique that was once employed here, Spearfish Creek is one of only two rivers in the world that freezes from the bottom up. Today anglers use fly rods and spinning lures to catch brook, rainbow, brown, and cutthroat trout.

While the cafés, brewpubs, and restaurants here are on par with those in the hottest outdoor towns in the U.S., Spearfish is still so under the radar that you're likely to have the hiking, rock climbing, mountain biking, trout fishing, and wildlife watching to yourself.

While the mountain-biking may take some searching for a first-time visitor, the 20-mile Rimrock Trail system, in Spearfish Canyon, is worth seeking out. It winds its way through quaking aspens and eventually hooks into a loop trail that tops out at 6,096-foot Old Baldy, which has a beautiful view to volcanic Crow Peak. To get the lay of the land fast, sign up for the Dakota Five-O, a 50-mile race in September that begins in Spearfish City Park and has a total elevation change of 7,594 feet as it winds around the Black Hills. Sign up well in advance—the race sells out months ahead of time. For gravel riders, the Forest Service maintains miles of recently improved crushed-limestone roads that seem to wind on forever. Serious riders sign up for the Mother Lode, a 210-mile gravel race that starts in Spearfish City Park and winds through the northern and southern Black Hills. If that sounds daunting, try one of the shorter 70- or 110-mile races, all part of the Gold Rush Gravel Grinder race weekend in June.

Whether driving through or spending a week, Spearfish is the kind of laid-back community that will have the coffee on at Common Grounds, where it's been brewing for the past 20 years; Canyon Cream Ale on tap at Crow Peak Brewing Company, which goes down smoothly after any adventure; and 900 hotel rooms, so there's always a place to stay. Time your trip to include a Friday night between June and Labor Day—the historic 600 block of Main Street has live music, free-flowing craft beers, and a welcoming vibe for weary travelers.



Located in the Black Hills between Mount Rushmore National Memorial and Devils Tower National Monument, Spearfish has hiking, biking, rock climbing, fly fishing and every type of adventure you can imagine.

SPEARFISH. MY GREAT PLACE IN SOUTH DAKOTA.

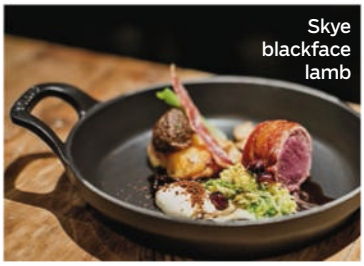
Plan Your Spearfish Adventure · VisitSpearfish.com · 1-800-344-6181 for Reservations

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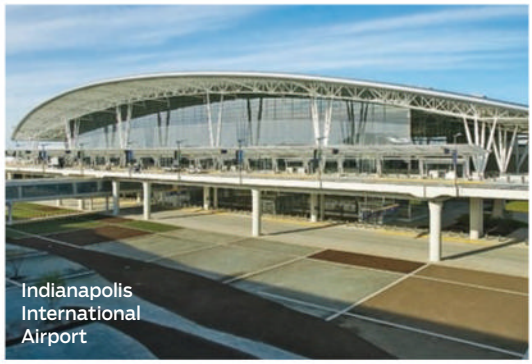
Spearfish
SOUTH DAKOTA


Kolarbyn's sauna on Skärsjön lake


Skye blackface lamb


The Three Chimneys


Chef Michael Smith


Indianapolis International Airport

jobs in those kitchens. Now they've returned to make use of their homeland's nearly 6,800 miles of coastline, abundant mushroom and strawberry harvests, and massive beef industry. Which is part of the reason the country named 2015 the Year of Food and Drink. Just about every town has at least one restaurant with a creative menu. To experience the best of it, go to the Three Chimneys, on the edge of Loch Dunvegan. Chef Michael Smith serves Sconser king scallops, Skye blackface lamb, and lobster from practically right out the door (three chimneys.co.uk). And don't forget to take in a Scotch distillery tour.

32. BEST DEAL
Kolarbyn Hostel

These 12 huts, located about 80 miles west of Stockholm, are made from wood and earth (you can pick blueberries off the roof) and set you up in the middle of a spruce forest straight out of Endor. Spend your days napping, hiking, or paddling nearby waterways, and end them with a visit to the floating sauna on Skärsjön lake. $120; kolarbyne.se

33. BEST EFFORT TO MITIGATE THAT CARBON FOOTPRINT
Indianapolis International Airport

Air travel is tough on the environment. So it's nice when there are initiatives like the IND Solar Farm. Last year, workers more than doubled the number of solar panels at Indianapolis International Airport to 76,000—enough to power 3,210 homes for an entire year.

34. BEST JACKET
Patagonia Alpine Houdini

This do-it-all layer keeps you dry in the nastiest squalls, and it squishes down to the size of a pack of cards. Bonus: the two-tone styling won't be out of place wherever you take shelter. $199; patagonia.com





35. BEST GUIDE: WILDERNESS
Carl Dixon

WITHIN THE WILD ADVENTURE COMPANY

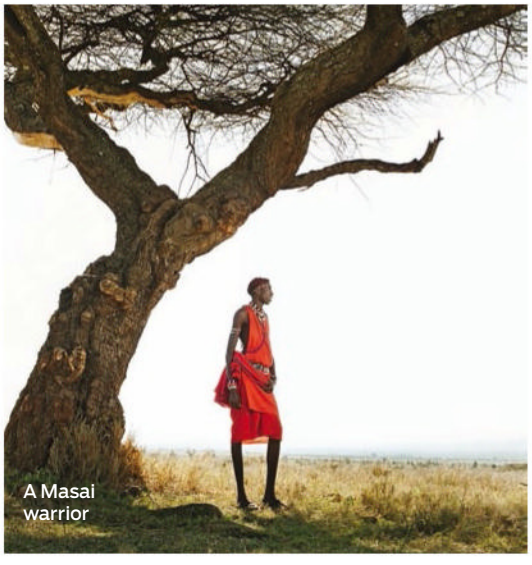
TURF: Alaska Range
CRED: Safety first is not a platitude when dogsledding in subzero temperatures or rafting an unexplored river in the Alaskan wilderness. You'll have no reason to worry with company co-owner Dixon, who started guiding in 1976; has extensive knowledge of the backcountry, advanced training in crevasse and whitewater rescue, a fixed-wing pilot license, and a Coast Guard 6-PK license; can fly a helicopter in a pinch; and gets by in German, Russian, and Spanish. The 64-year-old doesn't mind pushing guests' boundaries. "It's surprising to me that people are a little freaked out by our remoteness," he says, referring to his lodges on Tutka Bay and the Iditarod Trail, "but they have a strong need to feel a connection to the natural world, because they're farther away from it than ever."
BEST KNOWN FOR: River trips.
NEVER LEAVES HOME WITHOUT: An InReach satellite device.
BOOK HIM: withinthe wild.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: LASSE MODIN; COURTESY OF THE THREE CHIMNEYS; BEN ANDERS; SAM FENTRESS; BEN ANDERS

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The Earthpod rooms at Lewa House blend into the Kenyan landscape



A Masai warrior



Picnic lunch

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF LEWA HOUSE; COURTESY OF CAMPI YA KANZI; RYAN HEFFERNAN/OUTSIDE GO

36. BEST SAFARI

Kenya

Outside GO's 11-day Ultimate Conservation Safari was put together by owners Sandy and Chip Cunningham, who lived in Kenya for five years, in response to a simple truth: Africa's most worthwhile destinations are often some of its most vulnerable. You'll visit three remarkable locations on the cutting edge of both conservation and accommodation in the wildest sections of East Africa. Take Campi Ya Kanzi, nestled in the shadow of Kilimanjaro, which has exclusive access to 300,000 acres of wilderness with lions, elephants, zebras, and giraffes, and not a single tourist in sight. You'll be hosted by local Masai and sleep in a lavish tent without the humming generators that mar other properties—the camp gets 24-hour power from solar. The trip culminates in a visit to the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's elephant orphanage, where young pachyderms that have lost their parents to poaching are fostered. You'll get a once-in-a-lifetime, up-close look. From $9,585; outsidego.com/conservation

2015 BEST of TRAVEL OUTSIDE



An empty Baja surf break





Mary May's, Montana

39. BEST SURF TRIP
Baja, Mexico

There are lots of ways to enjoy Mexico. But I've found that the very best is to cross the border in a 4x4 truck with surfboards, a few extra tanks of gasoline, and a couple of bottles of mezcal. If you don't count the border cities of Tijuana and Mexicali—and, frankly, you shouldn't—the Baja peninsula has a population of just over two million spread across 55,000 square miles. That's fewer people than Houston. The region's 2,000 miles of wild and desolate Pacific coastline are littered with fantastic, almost always empty surf. Many of the most famous breaks—Quatros Casas, Scorpion Bay—now have hostels and other amenities on the bluffs, but the rule of thumb is that the farther you get from San Diego, the more challenging and rewarding it becomes. You get to work for your dinner: spear-caught fish for ceviche and a lobster as big as a small dog. Lodging options that far south are limited—we slept in tents or our truck bed—so if you go, remember that when the wind starts whipping and the night gets cold, dead yuccas burn hotter than tumbleweeds. —MATT SKENAZY

37. BEST VIRAL-VIDEO OPPORTUNITY

Sea-kayak with humpback whales in the Bay of Fundy, New Brunswick. From $85; seascapekayaktours.com



38. BEST AIRBNB PROPERTY
Mary May's

A morning spent at this carriage house outside Bozeman, Montana, presents a dilemma. Do you fire up the professional range, swing open the French doors, and have a leisurely breakfast? Do you head out and explore the property's 100 acres of trails and trout waters? Or do you hop in the car for a quick trip to Yellowstone? There's no easy answer, but few places let you experience as much for so little. $125; airbnb.com/rooms/3143557

40. BEST GUIDE: SAFARI
Philip Rono

MICATO SAFARIS

TURF: East Africa
CRED: Rono's clients have included President George W. Bush. That's because the 49-year-old's résumé includes the Kenya Professional Guide Association's Gold Level accreditation, the equivalent of earning a Ph.D. in wildlife. After 26 years leading trips, Rono has the uncanny ability to track every predator or bird. He was born in the Kenyan village of Eldoret, home to the fastest runners in the world, and gives guests access to marathoning superstars and sacred tribal ceremonies. But being a standout guide requires a lot more than finding the Big Five on demand: "I need to be a storyteller, a jester, a musician, a first-aid expert, a negotiator, a cross-cultural connector, and, above all, the best companion."
BEST KNOWN FOR: Bird-watching safaris.
NEVER LEAVES HOME WITHOUT: His Swarovski EL 10x42 binoculars, a Canon EOS 5D camera, and a pile of his favorite field guides.
BOOK HIM: micato.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: NOE DEWITT/TRUNK ARCHIVE; BARRETT & MACKAY/GETTY; COURTESY OF MARY MAY


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the green lantern

Human-rights superhero KUMI NAIDOO has a tough assignment: lead Greenpeace into 21st-century relevance. But after a year that saw activists lionized (imprisoned in Putin's jails) and then vilified (unfurling a message on Peru's ancient Nazca Lines), can he find a way forward?

by *ABE STREEP*



TOM VAN HEEL/GREENPEACE

A Romanian, a German, and a South African hailed a cab. It was around 11 P.M. on a cool night last September in Manhattan, and the men were planning to make a video.

They all worked for Greenpeace, the international environmental nonprofit, but had little in common besides that. The Romanian was Radu Dumitrascu, a 33-year-old communications specialist who'd joined Greenpeace after burning out on a D.C. desk job and spending a couple of years working to protect mountain gorillas in the Congo. The German, 46-year-old Wolfgang Sadik, was a lifer; he'd been with the organization for 25 years. He helped run the actions team, the cloak-and-dagger unit that does the planning when, say, an oil rig needs scaling. The South African was the boss, Greenpeace International executive director Kumi Naidoo. A tall, lanky, former human-rights activist with a kind manner, a gray-flecked beard, and an ever present African shirt, 50-year-old Naidoo is the organization's public face.

The men were in New York City for the UN Climate Summit, a meeting of 100 heads of state billed as the next major stage in world efforts to tackle global warming. Naidoo was excited about the previous day's march, in which nearly 400,000 people filled the streets of Manhattan, but no one was particularly optimistic about the UN gathering itself. Earlier that day, appearing on a panel at the 92nd Street Y with 350.org founder Bill McKibben and rockers turned activists Linkin Park, Naidoo had called it "verbal masturbation."

So he, Dumitrascu, Sadik, and a few others were going to apply pressure. The plan was to shoot a short social-media video of Naidoo calling for governments to enact clean-energy policy and, as he intoned in his deep baritone, "Listen to the people, not the polluters!" Later, at about 3 A.M., Sadik and a team would project that phrase onto one face of the UN building, on Manhattan's East Side, in several languages. The stunt was illegal but not dangerous, so Naidoo had only just been told the day before.

"The actions are often done on a need-to-know basis," he told me as the cab rolled along. "Most actions, I won't be consulted about it. But if it's something where it could be prison time or a very big court case, then they'll come to me and say, 'We are doing this action, it requires so much of the activists, the legal assessment is this, the worst-case scenario is this.' And I've never said no. Because our people are competent."

Naidoo is Greenpeace's great hope. He spent his teenage years fighting apartheid in South Africa, buried too many friends, went into exile, and later rose to prominence in the international human-rights world. Greenpeace recruited him in 2009, when the organization was having what could gently be called a crisis of relevance. At one time the most powerful direct-action group on earth, it was trapped in a frustrating phase. With about 2,500 employees spread across 41 offices around the world, Greenpeace was too big to play the underdog, but it was still weighed down by institutional nostalgia for its scrappy no-nukes days. Since taking over in 2009, Naidoo has driven an ambitious plan to turn Greenpeace from a top-down, European NGO—its headquarters are in Amsterdam—to a decentralized, quasi-guerrilla outfit with a powerful presence in the places where, he believes, the climate war will be won or lost: Africa, Asia, and South America.

The Nazca fiasco was raw meat for the large segment of the public that tends to think of environmentalists in general—and Greenpeace specifically—*AS STRIDENT OR OUT OF TOUCH.*

We hopped out at 41st Street, where three more members of the team waited by a balcony overlooking the East River. As a cameraman prepped Naidoo, I walked off to the side with Sadik. He had a big, well-coiffed sweep of silver hair, a mustache and soul patch, and large, probing eyes. He told me that when he was 16, his buddies wanted to join a protest against a power plant, but his father, who didn't like hippies or radicals, said he couldn't go. So he went. "It was wintertime, and I came at night to a secret group in the forest," Sadik recalled. "They said, 'We are with Greenpeace.' " He knew then what he needed to do with his life. "I wanted to feel politics with my senses," he told me. "That's why I always specialized in actions." Sadik did graduate work in archaeology at the University of Vienna but later came back to the Greenpeace fold. "Now," he said, "I'm saving future and past."

Naidoo finished speaking to the camera and began walking back to his hotel, leaving Sadik and the team to deal with the projection. As I watched all this, I was struck by an obvious flaw in the plan: Who would be walking by the UN at 3 A.M.? The whole thing seemed quaint and also kind of funny.

That is, it seemed funny until two months later, when an action in Peru backfired spectacularly and Naidoo was desperately trying to save Greenpeace's reputation after the worst gaffe in its 43-year history. At that point, I thought back to the last thing he'd said that night in New York, an offhand joke as he walked away: "Don't wake me up if you get arrested!"

HERE'S WHAT happened: In early December, a group of 20 Greenpeace activists from seven countries, including Argentina, Chile, and Germany, traveled about six hours south from Lima. Argentine Associated Press photographer Rodrigo Abd and Herbert Villarraga, a Colombian videographer for Reuters, accompanied them. The activists had come to Peru for COP20, a multinational climate conference designed to pave the way for a binding agreement on carbon emissions, and they had secretly planned this side trip.

Their destination was the Nazca Lines, one of Peru's most sacred sites. Starting around 500 B.C., the Nazca people, who lived in a nearby river valley, created hundreds of giant geoglyphs—trapezoids, a dog, a hummingbird, a pelican more than 900 feet long—by removing reddish brown surface rocks to expose the light soil beneath. Some scholars think they were religious symbols; others believe they were used to chart the seasons. The Nazca themselves were gone by 750 A.D., seemingly done in by vicious El Niño flooding exacerbated by their own agricultural clear-cutting. But because the Nazca Desert receives little rain and less wind, the lines have survived. A Unesco World Heritage site, they

are a popular fly-over destination for tourists and aerial photographers. The hummingbird graces one of Peru's most common coins.

In the predawn hours of December 8, the activists walked about half a mile from a dirt road to one of the most easily accessible symbols, the hummingbird. They carried backpacks, coolers of water, and a drone. As the sun rose, they unfurled tall, yellow cloth letters spelling out

TIME
FOR CHANGE!
THE FUTURE IS RENEWABLE
GREENPEACE

under the bird's beak. According to a *New York Times* report published a week after the incident, one activist, who appeared to be running things, told the others to be careful not to step on the lines. The story identified him as Wolfgang Sadik. In a video uploaded to YouTube, Sadik says, "We chose the Nazca Lines because we think that these lines are a symbol of climate change. What happened here in the past on a smaller scale happens now on a global scale, and the Nazca culture disappeared because of climate change."

The previous day, Greenpeace activists had posted footage of a similar message created at Machu Picchu. But Nazca is a more vulnerable place, and the moment the images went up on Twitter, the public attacked. Conservative media in Peru denounced the act as a violation of cultural heritage, and news outlets from the BBC to NBC followed. The activists had committed a grave insult by entering the site, which is off-limits to visitors without a guide and special footwear. Worse, the offenders left marks in the soil—their tracks and an imprint of the letter C—that,





















CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Greenpeace activists' infamous message in Nazca; Monsanto workers removing a Greenpeace logo in 1983; Naidoo and his daughter, Naomi, in 2011 after his release from a Greenland prison; international program director Pascal Husting; Wolfgang Sadik at the Nazca Lines; the campaign against the 1976 Canadian seal hunt; the *Rainbow Warrior* after a French attack in 1985; Naidoo outside the 2011 UN climate talks in South Africa; the *Arctic Sunrise* returning to Amsterdam from Russia last August; Naidoo at the People's Climate March in New York in September

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: RODRIGO ABD/CORBIS; DAVID L. RYAN/*BOSTON GLOBE*/GETTY; ALEX YALLOP/GREENPEACE; JEANE-PIERRE MUELLER/AFP/GETTY; GREENPEACE (2); ROSS WHITE/AFP/GETTY; STEPHANIE DE SAKUTIN/AFP/GETTY; MARTIN VAN DIJL/GREENPEACE; MICHAEL NAGLE/GREENPEACE

Peruvian officials allege, can't be erased.

The day after the action, the Nazca branch of La Fiscalia, Peru's federal prosecuting office, opened a preliminary investigation, a precursor to formal charges. But all 20 activists had left the country before any travel restrictions were put in place. Greenpeace went into damage control. The top brass claimed they had no advance knowledge of the action, and spokespeople issued anodyne apologies, including an understatement of the year: "This looks bad." Greenpeace refused to release the activists' names, a radical departure for an organization built on claiming credit for civil disobedience.

Like the rest of the leadership, Naidoo claimed ignorance. On December 8, he was in the Philippines, delivering solar chargers to victims of Typhoon Hagupit. That morning, before the uproar, his Twitter account retweeted an image of the Nazca stunt to his 30,000 followers, but Naidoo says he wasn't behind the tweet—Greenpeace's communications department helps manage his feed. Naidoo says he first heard what happened on his way to the airport in Manila to board a flight to Amsterdam. When the plane landed, his voice mail was full. He slept for six hours, then booked a flight to Lima. He arrived to find news teams waiting.

"This is not what we stand for," he boomed into a camera. "This is not what I stand for." When he walked out of a Nazca court after a preliminary hearing the following week, people threw eggs. "Watch out at the Taj Mahal, watch out at the pyramids in Egypt," scolded Peru's president, Ollanta Humala. "Because we all face the threat that Greenpeace could attack any of humanity's historical heritage." The group's Facebook page filled with profane invective. Canvassers in the U.S. were harassed. "In 35 years of activism," Naidoo told me, "there has never been a moment when I've felt so ashamed."

THE NAZCA FIASCO was raw meat for the large segment of the public that tends to think of environmentalists in general—and Greenpeace specifically—as strident or out of touch. It also surprised many, because Greenpeace has undergone a profound shift under Naidoo's leadership. Before he was hired, the group was seen by many as too stunt oriented, northern (read: white and a little naive), hungry for credit, and smug—in short, the kind of outfit that might have unfurled a dumb slogan at the Nazca Lines. But in the past five years, Greenpeace dramatically increased its standing among environmental and business leaders alike by making a shrewd double move.

Most visibly, it has returned to classic, bold direct action. At the same time, it has reinvented itself as a pragmatic, behind-the-scenes organization that can dramatically influence large corporations' global supply chains, convincing companies like Coca-Cola, for example, to drop fluorocarbons from its refrigerants. Last October, two months before Nazca, I spoke with Mark Tercek, CEO of the Nature Conservancy, who said, "Under Kumi's leadership, Greenpeace is less focused on flamboyant campaigns and more focused on getting things accomplished in the field."

"The way I see it," Naidoo says, "addressing climate change is more important than all the injustices we've fought over time put together. Colonialism, slavery, apartheid. *THIS IS ABOUT SURVIVAL.*"

Greenpeace was built on flamboyance. The organization was founded in 1972 in Vancouver, British Columbia, by would-be revolutionaries who called themselves "hobbits." The year before, when the U.S. government had planned a nuclear-bomb test at the Aleutian island of Amchitka, 11 protestors sailed north to intervene. They didn't stop the test, but they did launch a movement that would endure. Greenpeace picked and won big fights by relying on a simple formula: find someone harming the environment, confront them with cameras rolling, and use publicity to generate outrage. There were bumps along the way—notably, the 1985 sinking of Greenpeace's *Rainbow Warrior* vessel by French foreign-intelligence operatives in New Zealand—but during its first two decades, Greenpeace was arguably the most effective activist operation in history. It created a generation of antiwhaling and antinuclear activists, and gave donor-funded antiestablishment environmentalism a face.

Starting in the nineties, Greenpeace tried to paint itself as a policy influencer, ceding direct fights to groups like Rainforest Action Network and Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. Sea Shepherd's leader, Paul Watson, a Greenpeace cofounder turned vociferous critic, has become a household name, thanks to *Whale Wars,* the popular reality-TV series about direct action against Japanese whalers. Around 2005, Greenpeace started targeting corporations, taking on companies like McDonald's over logging in Amazon forests. Still, its influence waned; it was too extremist for corporations and not tough enough for other environmentalists.

Naidoo was hired to perform a brand rescue. He focused on a few key climate issues, like Arctic oil drilling and deforestation in Asia and the Amazon. He also pushed for an ambitious restructuring to move people and money away from traditional European environmental strongholds to places like China, Brazil, and India.

The shift south and east has caused some turmoil in the ranks, but it has also been seen as forward-thinking as other NGOs make similar moves. "All of us big international organizations that have our roots in North America and Europe have to change," says Samantha Smith, director of global climate and energy initiatives at the World Wildlife Fund. "We're not winning the fights we need to win. If you can't credibly speak to the concerns of developing countries about getting people out of poverty while also getting off coal, you're not going to be effective."

But it's the return to civil disobedience that has raised Greenpeace's public profile the most. In 2011, Naidoo became the first international executive director to get arrested, when he scaled an oil rig off the coast of Greenland. Two years later, in September 2013, 28 Greenpeace activists protesting Arctic drilling, along with a photographer and videographer, were arrested in international waters off the Russian coast. Some of the group were climbing an oil platform when a helicopter materialized overhead, dropping balaclava-clad Russian troops armed with machine guns onto the deck of their icebreaker, the *Arctic Sunrise*. The activists were charged with piracy (later lessened to hooliganism) and threatened with 15 years in prison. For nearly three months, the so-called Arctic 30 languished in primitive, freezing jails. Naidoo offered to trade places with them, and 11 Nobel Prize winners wrote to Russian president Vladimir Putin, asking that the charges be dropped. German chancellor Angela Merkel and New Zealand prime

minister John Key chimed in, and even Watson had to praise his old outfit. "It appears that Greenpeace has sparked a new cold war," he wrote on his Facebook page. Nearly four months after the arrest, on the eve of the Sochi Olympics, Russia released the Arctic 30. Greenpeace, it seemed, was back.

ON THE SURFACE, Greenpeace and Naidoo aren't an obvious match. He grew up in a poor township outside Durban, the second of four children in a family descended from Indian indentured servants. But Kumi and his siblings never felt poor, even when they attended an elementary school that lacked electricity. His mother, Mana, sewed clothing for neighbors, and his father, Shunmugam, was a bookkeeper. "We have enough," Mana would tell the kids. A picture of Mahatma Gandhi hung on a wall in the family home.

In June of 1976, when Kumi was ten, thousands of black students gathered in Soweto—the famous township near Johannesburg—to protest the government's decree that Afrikaans would be a compulsory language in public schools. Police opened fire, killing hundreds. The Naidoo kids were only vaguely aware of the violence. "I clearly remember our teachers telling us we were privileged because we were top students, and we would get out of the township," says Kumi's younger brother, Kovin, now a leading optometrist in South Africa.

In 1980, this optimism crashed down in a sudden stroke when Mana committed suicide. Kumi, who was 15, briefly sought refuge in alcohol, getting tanked and falling asleep on park benches. Then he and Kovin threw themselves into the student protest movement, taking part in dangerous clashes with police. Kumi has often asked himself whether his mother's death pushed him to the front lines. "If she had been alive," he says, "would I have had the courage? I always wonder."

Kumi and Kovin were expelled from high school for their roles in the marches. The principal called Shunmugam and told him to pick up his sons. Shunmugam replied that the boys could walk and hung up. Shortly after that, sensing the potential for more trouble, he took the boys' passports and hid them.

In 1983, Kumi enrolled at the University of Durban-Westville, where he studied politics. He and Kovin soon joined the African National Congress—an illegal act, since the party had been forced underground—working in different cells. Kumi helped lead the ANC's student group and also organized for the armed revolutionary branch, recruiting and distributing illegal literature. He told me he never took part in any violence, an assertion that a half-dozen sources in South Africa back up. "I was so high-profile in the mass movement," he says. "They were bugging our phone. So I was never put under pressure to join the armed struggle."



CHRISTIAN GRUND/13PHOTO/REDUX

Still, Naidoo says, it was a different time with a different moral code, and he spent most of his weekends at the funerals of friends killed by police. In December 1986, he was awarded a Rhodes scholarship to study political philosophy at Oxford University. By then, however, Naidoo's ANC cell had been compromised and he was on the run, hiding in friends' houses. Soon after the Rhodes news, the police came to his dad's house late at night, threatening to kill Kumi if they caught him. Another night, he snuck back home and Shunmugam gave him his passport. The next spring, to avoid a court summons that he was convinced would lead to his imprisonment and torture, he had some doctor friends admit him to a hospital, where they administered a placebo IV. He was discharged just before the court sent police racing over.

But before Naidoo could flee to England, he still had to take his exams. So he asked a friend, prominent playwright Ronnie Govender, to design a disguise. "He said, 'We're going with the Lionel Richie,' " Naidoo recalls. The young activist got a perm, shaved his beard, and walked around unmolested while finishing his exams with the help of a sympathetic professor. Close friends couldn't recognize him. He made it to England and was just a year into his Ph.D. studies, in June 1988, when Kovin was arrested and thrown into solitary confinement for eight months.

In 1990, the ANC was unbanned and Nelson Mandela was released from prison. Naidoo returned to South Africa to help establish the ANC as a legitimate party, then trained electoral staff for the country's first democratic election, in 1994, when Mandela became president. It wasn't long before he saw his comrades taking lucrative jobs or entering politics. "People **continued on page 108**





photographs by thomas prior

A Glorious Way to Die



The Whitewater Grand Prix is paddling's most insane event, a scrappy, alcohol-soaked gauntlet that sends competitors down some of the most fearsome rapids in the world. It's so dangerous and spectator-unfriendly that many sponsors won't go anywhere near it. But as FREDERICK REIMERS found out at the 2014 edition, held on the flooded rivers of southern Quebec, it might be exactly what the struggling sport needs.



British kayaker Bren Orton; opposite, Kalob Grady air-screwing on the Black Mass wave


TITAN

In Early May, Quebec's Mistassini River is still full of ice.

Muscled up with spring runoff and stained almost black by tannins from tundra far to the north, the eddies are swirling, acre-wide slurries. Underneath a highway bridge in the town of Dolbeau-Mistassini, 40,000 cubic feet per second—almost half the flow of Niagara Falls—rush through a narrow gap and then plunge over a jagged line of granite bedrock ribs. Oceanic waves, some more than ten feet high and 70 feet wide, rise and break, and the river implodes into churning pits of whitewater known simply as Bridge Rapid. Normally, no one here pays the rapid much mind—it's just another thunderous falls in this broad, waterlogged province—but today there is a spectacle brewing.

Cars and vans topped with crayon-colored kayaks are parked along the road, and a dozen boaters in helmets and drysuits line the bridge, studying the maelstrom. Motorists slow to see what's happening, and eventually a small crowd forms. The kayakers are in town for the third edition of the world's toughest whitewater competition, the 2014 Whitewater Grand Prix, a grueling two-week, six-event contest designed to anoint the world's best all-around paddler.

Bridge Rapid is too dangerous even for the Grand Prix—at this flow, it's one of the biggest in the world—but that fact hasn't deterred roughly half the field from considering a run at it. Today is not an official stage, and the only thing at stake is prime footage. While the paddlers huddle on the bridge for an hour, discussing tactics and routes and ratcheting up courage, the Grand Prix's photographers and videographers fiddle with their camera gear.

Eventually, 28-year-old Chris Gragtmans is ready to run probe. "Mind if I go first?" he calls to Spaniard Aniol Serrasolses, who is also preparing to put in. "I'm not trying to be tough. I just don't want to have to watch any carnage before I go." Serrasolses nods, and a few minutes later Gragtmans launches from shore in his nine-foot plastic expedition kayak. He crosses the eddy and turns into the current as the Grand Prix media team sends drones into the air. He is whisked with astonishing speed down the broad, foam-streaked tongue toward the erupting chaos below. Within seconds he appears as a tiny water bug skittering between exploding waves twice his height.

Where the river churns against a rock island, he is swept left and lines up a hydraulic big enough to flip a tugboat. He charges into the maw and disappears. After ten anxious seconds, he pops up downstream of the hole and rolls upright. Gragtmans gives the OK. It's on.

After a few more successful runs, a commotion arises as two of the youngest competitors, 20-year-old Kalob Grady and 21-year-old Dane Jackson, paddle their tiny carbon-fiber freestyle kayaks toward an enormous 12-foot-tall wave at the top of the rapid. It would be ideal for surfing if it weren't located directly above the deadly rapid. Grady slides smoothly into the pocket and begins throwing air screws, the sport's most spectacular trick—an inverted flip in which the kayak spins on its axis like a spiraling football. Next up is Jackson, two-time defending Grand Prix champion and son of Eric Jackson, the most decorated paddler of all time and the owner of Jackson Kayaks. His air screws are even bigger. Again and again he spirals his kayak clean above the river and splashes down in perfect control. "That's probably the burliest wave ever surfed," says one awestruck competitor on the bridge.

Then the unthinkable happens. Jackson accidentally drops his paddle. It flashes into the foam pile behind him and is gone. The crowd freezes. Jackson leans forward over his deck and begins furiously hand-paddling toward the eddy. He can't quite make it and is swept downstream toward the pounding ledge holes. He leans his whole body against one churning wave after another, the tiny kayak flicking back and forth. Somehow he wills his way around the fatal ledges, and in a few seconds he sloshes safely into an eddy at the base of the falls, arriving just before his paddle.

Everyone is astounded. "That's the most progressive thing I've seen in kayaking," fellow competitor Rush Sturges, at 30 one of the sport's elder statesmen, says while shaking his head.

AT THE Whitewater Grand Prix, the days off can be just as important as the stages. Taking inspiration from events like mountain biking's Red Bull Rampage, held annually in a remote spot not likely to attract many spectators, the Grand Prix's main objective is to create videos of elite athletes competing in the most dramatic and demanding settings. Whether or not the footage is captured during an official stage makes no difference to founder Patrick Camblin, 32, a former professional kayaker who grew up on the banks of Canada's Ottawa River. Most athletes wear at least one GoPro, and a media team accompanies them whenever they hit the water. Every few days, Camblin and company upload short highlight reels to Vimeo, where the clips have become some of the most popular whitewater segments of all time.

Clockwise from top left: closing party; riverside campfire; women's winner Martina Wegman; between stages; Nicole Mansfield; Dane Jackson; hotel downtime; Ben Marr launches a drone; Nick Troutman; event organizer Patrick Camblin; Jackson gets inverted; Jackson's slipper

Editing video into the wee hours every night is only part of the challenge. During the day, Camblin must also choreograph a nimble, guerrilla-style operation and oversee all the judges, timekeepers, and safety procedures. By design the Grand Prix has no set locations, and while the scoring criteria vary from event to event, the freestyle stages are all about who can throw the biggest, most technical tricks and the downriver stages are either timed or head-to-head races. All the rivers are within a day's drive of Quebec City, but where the caravan of staff, volunteers, and 35 competitors—28 men and seven women—end up is dictated entirely by the water levels, which change daily at this time of year, depending on rainfall, temperatures, and snowpack.

For the three races in the 2014 edition, Camblin hopes to cue up Class V rapids that few, if any, of the competitors have even seen. For the three freestyle stages, the optimum water level occurs when a targeted river wave—features with names like Detonator and Black Mass—is at its steepest. Most freestyle competitions are technical affairs with

"It's the hardest stuff anyone's ever competed on," says Shane Benedict, cofounder of Liquidlogic Kayaks. "I hope they're prepared for the worst."














little risk. "At the Grand Prix," Sturges points out, "even the freestyle is scary." The waves are often so fast and twitchy that many people struggle to even catch them. And getting flushed from one can be dangerous. During the 2011 event, while the athletes were practicing on an Ottawa River wave called Gladiator, a recreational paddler had to be resuscitated after drowning in a hydraulic just a few yards downstream from the venue.

Between stages the competitors may opt to lie low and recuperate or, as they did that day at the Mistassini's Bridge Rapid, attempt to cure their hangovers by paddling one of the world's most fearsome stretches of whitewater. "When you get a group of hard chargers like these together," says Sturges, who has notched dozens of first descents around the world, "the vibe is contagious. Everyone kicks their game up to the next level."

The next level is what the sport desperately needs if it's going to rebound. According to the research firm Leisure Trends Group, whitewater kayaking hit its peak in 2002, with 3.9 million paddlers. By 2004, that number had fallen by half, and it's stayed there ever since. Meanwhile, whitewater-kayak sales have been stagnant for more than a decade.

During the sport's heyday, whitewater competitions were booming and top pros like Eric Jackson made as much as six figures from sponsors. "We called it the golden gravy train," says Lisa Kincaid, a former professional kayaker who is now the marketing manager at Kokatat, which makes paddlesport accessories. Elite paddlers mounted ever more challenging expeditions to remote mountain gorges in places like Madagascar and Tibet; others chased notoriety by seeing who could huck the highest waterfall. By 2009, when Tyler Bradt launched himself off Washington's 186-foot Palouse Falls, he landed on *Good Morning America*—but barely made a cent for his harrowing stunt. The massive SUV marketing budgets and booming kayak sales that helped fuel the sport's brief ascension had disappeared, and the larger paddling companies had already begun shifting the bulk of their resources toward more accessible activities like kayak fishing, recreational kayaking, and stand-up paddleboarding.

"It's not surprising," says Brad Ludden, one of the most successful paddlers from the early 2000s. "Kayaking is a hard sport to learn, can be scary as hell, and takes place mostly on remote mountain rivers. The consumer base is never going to be huge."

Camblin acknowledges as much, but he's convinced it could be a lot bigger if the competitions were more entertaining. "They're boring to watch and boring to compete in," he says. Last year's World Freestyle Kayak Championship was held on a knee-high wave on North Carolina's Nantahala River that wouldn't give a drunk inner-tuber pause, Camblin notes, much less "inspire a 15-year-old kid to share the footage on social media."

Figuring out how to do that hasn't been easy. Even with nearly every one of the world's top paddlers committed to this year's event, Camblin failed to convince a single whitewater company to sign on as a cash sponsor. Once again there is no prize money.

When I stopped by his hotel room one night a few stages into the competition, Camblin and his two video editors, Matt Baker and Andrew Pollock, were way behind on their production goals despite some very late nights. They'd posted just one recap video and one course preview. All three were bent over their glowing 27-inch Macs, while two other staff members sat on the rumpled beds working on competition scoring sheets.

At the two prior Grand Prix events, Camblin had a staff of six paid videographers and editors. "This year," says Camblin, who is laconic and heavy lidded even when rested, "I'm relying on two friends who will help me for free." Heading into this year's event, Camblin was $80,000 in debt, largely from financing the first two Grand Prix events himself—including paying for three-quarters of the competitors' room, board, and transportation. (In 2014, he covered these expenses for only half the paddlers.) To save money, he recently moved back in with his parents and gave up his old beater car.

When not paddling, they're editing and posting GoPro clips, learning to fly drones, or giving each other mullets in the parking lot.

"If I can pull off one more of these," Camblin told me before the event, "I think companies will see it as a proven concept and worth investing in."

It's not a far-fetched idea. NBC Sports recently made deals with Red Bull Rampage and GoPro Mountain Games to air recaps of the events. A couple of months before the 2014 Grand Prix, GoPro swooped in as a pilot sponsor, writing a big enough check that Camblin thinks the event will break even. "We signed on because there was so much content availability," says Gregg DiLeo, a GoPro marketing manager who handles whitewater. "We really like getting involved in core events."

THE FIRST TIME most of the competitors see the Shawinigan, the site of the second downriver race, they're suffering the aftermath of a bender in Montreal, where a good chunk of the field had been clubbing until closing time following the boatercross event. It's a gray, 40-degree day, with winter road sand still not swept from the streets. The course looks brutal. Brown, frothing snowmelt plunges over three successive rock-strewn falls. There's no safe route at all down the right half of the middle falls, a 30-foot-high jaw of broken rock. Worse for morale is the fact that many of the racers arrive just as Nick Troutman finds himself in serious trouble.

Troutman, the 2009 world freestyle kayak champ and husband of Emily Jackson, Dane's sister, is a 26-year old Canadian with the ebullient personality of a camp counselor. He isn't hungover but still makes a terrible mistake. On his first practice lap, he chooses to run the low-head dam above the first falls. The dam does have a safe passage—a six-foot-wide notch where the current pushes straight through. Unfortunately, Troutman misses it by a few feet and plops sideways into the deep, deadly seam.

The hydraulics below low-head dams, which are designed so that water flows over the top, can be impossible for a boat or a body to escape, and there is panic from the competitors and race staff onshore. Many paddlers have died in similar circumstances. Knowing this, Troutman doesn't try to paddle out of it—instead he wet exits and dives as far away from the dam as possible. Amazingly, he escapes, but he's now being swept downstream toward the three punishing falls. With windmilling strokes, he makes the shore just at the top lip, crawling to his feet on the slippery boulders. He watches as his kayak is dragged down the rapid and crumpled by submerged rocks.

The crowd lets out a collective sigh. "That's terrible," Sturges says. "That's the Grand Prix," another competitor replies. Everyone nods, their faces slack and rubbery with fear. But soon enough it's back to business. Some go suit up for their own runs while a few of the men turn their attention back to their phones, swiping away on Tinder, as they do whenever there's a lull in the action.

At the inaugural Grand Prix, eight kayakers swam during the first time trial. In 2012, when the event was held in Chile, there were broken



Jackson surfing Bridge Rapid

ribs and a dislocated shoulder, and Olympic slalom paddler Mike Dawson spent two days in intensive care with a lung infection after he nearly drowned in a sieve. That same year, Chilean Marcos Gallegos was pinned in his kayak under a submerged log and struggled to keep his head above water for nine terrifying minutes before another racer rescued him. After just two stages at the current Grand Prix, two competitors have dropped out with shoulder injuries and one is paddling with a broken finger. "It's the hardest stuff anyone's ever competed on," says Shane Benedict, cofounder of Liquidlogic Kayaks. "I hope they're prepared for the worst."

Spooked by Troutman's close call, the field votes to nix the first falls from the course, eliminating the risk of being swept down the unrunnable side of the subsequent rapid. When the time trial begins, racers are released from shore in two-minute intervals. They careen down the rock-strewn rapid like pachinko balls, bashing through curtains of spray and trying to keep their kayaks pointed straight off a sheer 20-foot drop. After fighting through a sticky hydraulic at the base, sometimes upside down, they sprint toward the next falls, a chunky 25-footer squeezed between broken rock ledges, and ended with a 50-yard sprint to the finish line.

One racer bounces onto his head halfway down the reef but rolls up quickly and keeps sprinting. Another flops over the falls backward. It starts to rain, and I find myself standing next to racer Joel Kowalski's mother, one of just a handful of spectators. We watch as the paddle is ripped from one woman's hands in the middle of the rapid. She bails out of her boat, and it plunges over the 20-foot falls alongside her. "That wasn't very good, was it?" Joel's mom says. According to my tally, it's the sixth swim of the Grand Prix so far.

Only Dane Jackson makes the course look easy. In addition to his previous two Grand Prix victories, he also won the 2013 World Freestyle Kayak Championships and made the podium in three other disciplines—squirt boating, C-1, and open canoe, which would be like Shaun White winning a gold medal in the snowboarding superpipe and then clicking into skis and medalling in moguls and skiercross at the same Olympics.

"He is hands down the best kayaker in the world right now," says Sturges. "He's superhuman." By all accounts, he has that rare combination of innate talent and unflagging dedication to his craft. Most of the competitors made four or five practice laps on the Shawinigan course, but Jackson estimates he logged over 20—so many that he cracked his boat. Where the Shawinigan's rocky course makes most racers' strokes choppy and violent, like they're in a fistfight, Jackson's are fluid, and his kayak scythes downstream like it's on rails. He easily wins the stage, moving into first place in the men's standings.

LATER THAT evening, in the motel's generic conference room, it's Troutman who's leading the field, exuberantly organizing a drinking game called Rage Cage. I can't follow the rules, which include Ping-Pong balls and stacks of cups rotating around the table, and do my best to blend in and avoid having to drink the King's Cup, a nasty mix of vodka and Coors Light.

While most of the competitors are here, Camblin is absent, as are the three Ph.D. students (geomorphology, physics, and parasitology). There are a few ironic mustaches and mullets, but the aesthetic is more goofy than hipster. Evan Garcia, one of the top men in the field, frequently wears a Mexican wool poncho, while Jackson plods around in a pair

of puffy slippers fashioned to look like giant cans of Molson.

Although the party goes past 2 A.M. and the group consumes about ten cases of beer and several bottles of vodka, it's a pretty tame gathering by Grand Prix standards. At the Chilean event, Sturges, who in addition to producing eight kayak flicks has released a pair of hip-hop albums, freestyled on stage at the host resort until forced off by the management and was then kicked out entirely for juggling beer mugs—poorly—on the dance floor, breaking several. In 2011, in Dobleau-Mistassini, a competitor trapped a skunk he'd found wandering around outside and tossed it into a room where a dozen people were hanging out drinking.

By this point, the competitors have settled into a fairly predictable rhythm: heavy drinking at night followed by woozy morning carpools, first to get coffee and egg sandwiches at the nearest Tim Horton's, then to a parking lot beside one of the province's flood-swollen rivers, where Camblin delivers the day's briefing. Depending on the stage, they'll either stomp through a slippery wet gorge, scouting every square foot of the frightening race rapids, or huddle up wet and steaming around a smoky campfire beside some thundering wave. Other times they'll help with safety, as they did at a freestyle stage held at the Black Mass wave, taking turns raising a flag whenever a car-trunk-size chunk of ice was heading toward a surfing kayaker.

To save money, most of the competitors share vehicles and cram four to a room. They cook "gypsy stir-fry" on Coleman two-burners on their doorsteps, at one point using ingredients salvaged from Troutman's garbage. When not paddling, they're editing and posting their own GoPro clips, learning to fly drones, or giving each other mullets in the parking lot. Wherever they go, there's always an airplane crash of damp gear—yellow GoreTex drysuits, blue personal flotation devices, and black neoprene spray skirts—hanging from every available hook, railing, and ledge.

A few days after the Rage Cage party, the inside of Camblin's hotel room also looks like something exploded. There are Red Bull and Pabst Blue Ribbon cans everywhere, and for some reason they've set up the ironing board. They're still a few stages behind schedule, but when they post new videos online, the clips quickly rack up a few thousand hits. People are definitely following, though the viewership isn't as high as in previous years. ("That's because I didn't have someone whose job it is to spray the stuff all over the Internet," Camblin will tell me later.) "Surprisingly," he says, "GoPro is still happy with us even with our glacial posting pace."

For the most part, everyone else is happy, too. There has been the usual grumbling about some of the scoring and timing organization. One racer feels she would have won the boatercross if the finish-line rules had been explained more accurately, and another complained that the big-trick guidelines changed in the middle of the competition. But most buy into the overall concept of creating great footage and are happy enough to follow Camblin around frozen, soggy Quebec for two weeks, taking huge risks for the cameras.

"The credibility he has among kayakers is incredible," says Ryan Bailey, who is covering the event for kayaking pub *Banks Mag* and is one of the organizers of the sport's other new pinnacle event, Idaho's North Fork Championship race. "I don't think anyone else could pull this off."

The problem, of course, is finding more sponsors to sign on. "Paddling companies have told me that they are not interested in working with the Grand Prix due to how critical Patrick is of other events," says Eric Jackson, who pulled out of this year's event following the first stage after voicing his discontent with the scoring system. As Bailey acknowledges, "Patrick is definitely more of an artist than a salesman."

Even if Camblin were the world's best pitchman, he might have trouble getting his own struggling industry on board. "It's a price issue for us," says Liquidlogic's Benedict. "I love the Grand Prix concept, but we don't have a sponsorship budget." A few months after the 2014 Grand Prix, in an effort to streamline costs, Liquidlogic decided to shift to a direct-to-consumer model. Last December, the Payette River Games, which has offered the biggest purse left for whitewater kayakers, announced that it is cutting the kayaking events in lieu of stand-up paddleboarding. "We have really enjoyed doing our best to promote and expand the sport of whitewater kayaking over the past four years," event organizer Mark Pickard said in a press release. "But we've decided not to underwrite the expense of hosting another kayak event."

Lots of them didn't want to run the rapid at all. Two weeks of fear, competition, and crowded cars and hotel rooms have ground them down.

Clockwise from top left: Evan Garcia; Rush Sturges; the freestyle venue at Black Mass; Aniol Serrasolses; Marcos Gallegos; spectators at Bridge Rapid; dinner fixings; Sam Ward; Camblin; Louis Philippe Rivest on the final drop of the stage-six giant slalom; watching a freestyle stage; Mathieu Dumoulin

THE MOST notorious rapids are defined by what lurks below their surface, unseen. There are drops that have been run safely hundreds of times, and then one day some variable conspires to hold a body in the rocks below. Others, like the one at the crux of the final race-course on the Basse Cache River, do strange, violent things to a kayak on seemingly every run. The best kayakers possess an ability to divine a river's intentions and to negotiate, by timing and force, a course through. But none of them can plan for what they can't see.

At its crux, the 50-foot-wide Basse Cache slumps into a 20-foot-deep cleft against the right wall. The racers all want to run left, across the grain and over a ten-foot shelf of galloping whitewater, but so far every one of them gets subsumed trying to do so. They reemerge as many as five unnerving seconds later, one with knuckles bloodied, another with his paddle snapped in half, and a third with his helmet cracked.

Lots of them didn't want to run the rapid at all. Two weeks of fear, competition, and crowded cars and hotel rooms have ground them down, and now they're faced with a river too high to run, let alone race.

"I'll walk away," Adriene Levknecht, an intense 26-year old paramedic from Greenville, North Carolina, calls out to other female racers scouting the river. "I'll just start driving south." They cluster in a knot, discussing whether to hold their course on an easier section or to race at all. Mutiny is in the air.

Camblin is confident that the flow will drop to reasonable levels overnight. "The alpha guys will step up," he says. "There will be a race, and it doesn't matter if they don't all run it."

The next morning, the flow has subsided but is still too high for a pair of very dangerous rapids downstream. Camblin decides to shorten the course and posts a squad of volunteers below the finish line to fish out swimmers before they're swept downriver. "If you swim, we let your boat go," Camblin says at the briefing. "No chasing equipment."

During the race several do swim, their spray skirts imploded by the big drop. Each is pulled ashore by ropes **continued on page 108**

JASPER GIBSON (WATERFALL)




Street
PROTECTION








RedBull






Jackson



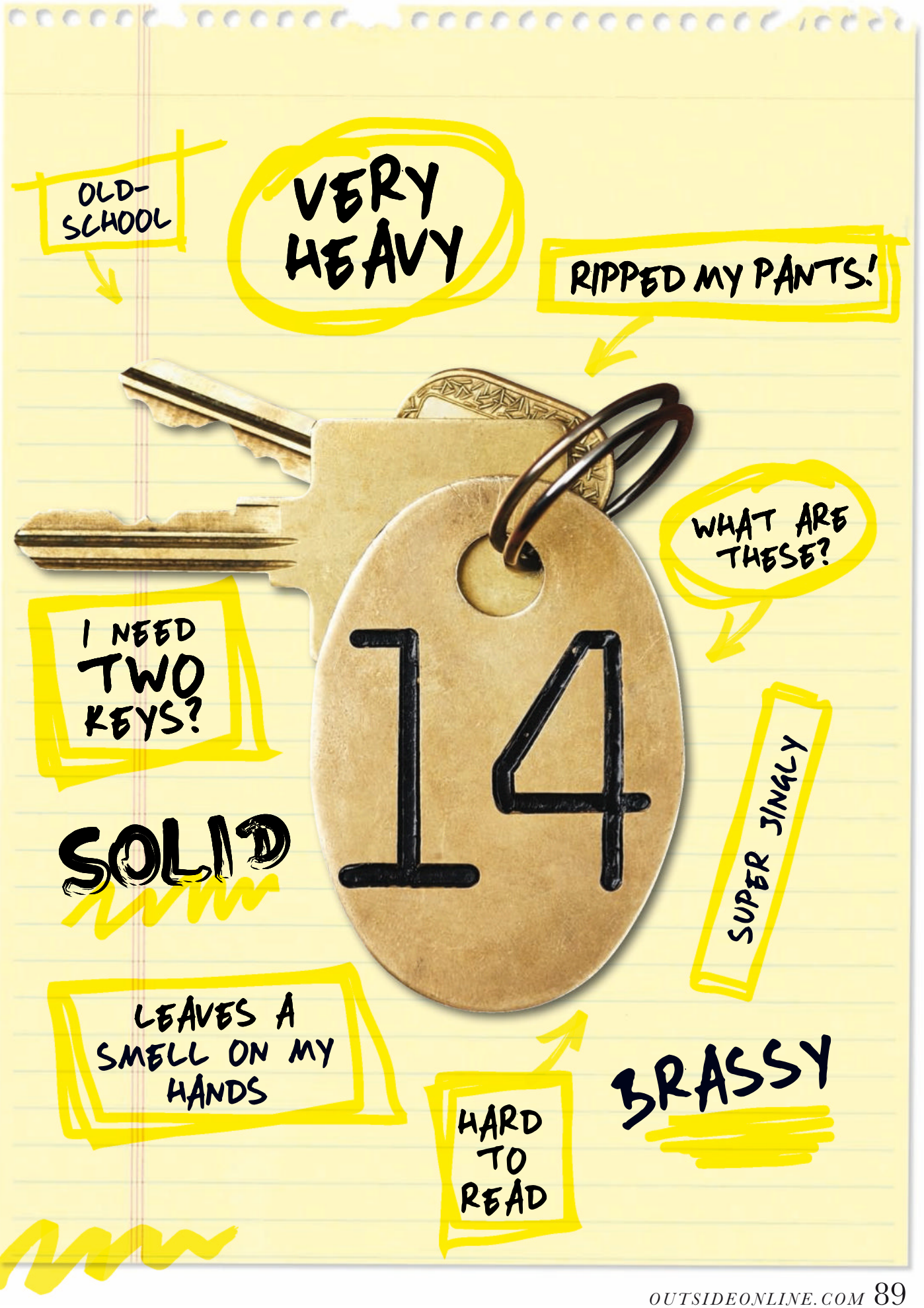

MSR



APRIL 2015

LOUD-SOURCING

RESEARCH ALMOST ANY TRAVEL DESTINATION AND YOU'LL PROBABLY WIND UP ON **TRIPADVISOR**, WHERE PASSIONATE PEOPLE PRAISE AND DENOUNCE EVERYTHING FROM ROMANTIC GETAWAYS TO COCKROACH-INFESTED HOTEL ROOMS. BUT WHO CAN YOU TRUST? **TOM VANDERBILT** MAPS OUT THE MOST POWERFUL TRAVEL TOOL ON EARTH.



NATHAN PERKEL/GALLERY STOCK

THE KORYO HOTEL DOES PRETTY WELL ON TRIPADVISOR, ALL THINGS CONSIDERED. THE INTERNET NEVER—AND I MEAN NEVER—WORKS. THE TOWELS ARE "THIN," THE SHEET THREAD COUNT LOW, AND THE MILK POWDERED. WATCH OUT FOR THE "GIANT MUTANT COCKROACH SNAKE HYBRID" IN THE SHOWER.

Guests even have to pay for the pool.

Still, the Koryo, a pair of dull beige towers connected near the top by a sky bridge, is the number-one-rated hotel on TripAdvisor for Pyongyang, North Korea. Despite its many faults, it garners three and a half out of five "bubbles," in TripAdvisor parlance (so as not to be confused with the star systems that signify quality in hotels and restaurants), across nearly 90 reviews.

Perhaps this is no surprise. People come expecting the worst, and with expectations so dismally calibrated, something like hot water starts to sound pretty amazing. Reviewers carefully note that many of the hotel's quirks—you can't walk out the front door unaccompanied, for instance—are out of the manager's hands. (You'll have to take that up with the Supreme Leader.) It may not be the Ritz-Carlton, the sentiment goes, but considering the fact that you are staying in the marquee property in the showcase capital of the world's most repressive regime, it may be best to, as one reviewer counseled, "just chill out, have some beers, some expired Oreos from the gift shop and make friends with the other tourists."

The fact that so many people are so earnestly reviewing a hotel that they have not themselves chosen (accommodations are selected by government-sanctioned tour operators), in a situation in which management is hardly likely to care, in a country where the Internet-driven wisdom of crowds is a remote fiction, speaks to the curious power of TripAdvisor, which, in its decade and a half of existence, has changed travel as we know it. The reviews demonstrate the abiding urge to share and the faith that sharing—even for that one-more-grain-of-sand 12,858th reviewer of the Bellagio Las Vegas—will make someone else's experience, or quite possibly *everyone's* experience, that much better.

No matter your destination, you will, at some point in your research, visit TripAdvisor. The company, with the humble mantra "real hotel reviews you can trust," has become—on a rising tide of 200 million user reviews and counting—a travel-industry Goliath, able to turn obscure hotels into sold-out hot spots, carry new flocks of visitors on digital word of mouth to quiet destinations, even rewrite the hospitality standards of entire nations. For travelers the impact has been equally profound. What begins as a simple search-engine query becomes an epic fact-finding mission that leaves no moldy shower curtain unturned, a labyrinthine choose-your-own-adventure—do you read the one-bubble rant?—in which the perfect hotel always seems just one more click away. For all the power of the service, it raises deep questions about travel itself, including, most pressingly, who do we want—who do we *trust*—to tell us where to go? "The future," Don DeLillo once wrote, "belongs to crowds." Are we there yet?



The author and his daughter at Chamico's, ranked #92 of 229 restaurants in Tulum, Mexico, on TripAdvisor

MANY YEARS AGO, when the Internet was still just hobbyist bulletin boards in a handful of homes, I went backpacking with a friend across Mexico. Like everyone did back then, we carried a Bible-worn copy of *Let's Go: Mexico,* which represented pretty much our entire universe. Its recommendations were usually decent but were based largely on one college student's legwork. Who knows if he actually looked at the room or just hurriedly scanned the lobby? What was her standard for "clean"? The first night in Mexico City, our hotel had small creatures in the walls,

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JANCEE DUNN

unmentioned by the guide. Asking around, we eventually landed in a cheap and obscure place. That's how it worked: We were in an information-poor environment. We gleaned recommendations from the gringo grapevine. You never quite knew what to expect, but wasn't that why you were traveling?

Barbara Messing, TripAdvisor's chief marketing officer, remembers those days, too. "There was that community of travelers in East Africa or South America who were circling the hotels in *Lonely Planet* that were really good or telling you what was closed or had good breakfast," she recalls to me by phone from the company's headquarters, near Boston. "That entire offline community got imported onto TripAdvisor."

And how. The site now has reviews of hotels, restaurants, and attractions in more than 45 countries, with contributors (all unpaid) adding their comments at a rate of 115 per minute. Some 890,000 hotels are listed on the site, and TripAdvisor boasts one of the largest collections of user-contributed travel photographs in the world. (The collection of shower-drain photos alone could fill a museum.) On its myriad forums, even the most banal query (e.g., "Does this resort have 110v plugs in its rooms?") seems to excite a flurry of replies, often within 24 hours. Though the site sometimes seems like a place people go to air complaints, as Messing tells me, "In general, our reviewers are a happy bunch." For hotels the average rating is above four bubbles. Because people use the site to plan their trips, she says, the ratings can be as much about "thanking the community for pointing them in the right direction." In other words, reviews of TripAdvisor itself.

These days, you can hardly visit a restaurant in a beach town without seeing the TripAdvisor owl in the window or finish a bike tour without being implored, via follow-up e-mail, to leave your feedback on the site. "It hasn't changed travel like jets changed travel," says Henry Harteveldt, an industry analyst with Atmosphere Research Group. But "it has changed the satisfaction we can get from a trip and the ability to better understand the destinations." Where travel is concerned, Harteveldt says, "information becomes instantly static and stale. With TripAdvisor, you know if a hotel that a few years ago was fresh and wonderful is still fresh and wonderful—or has become tired." More important, he says, it "has empowered the consumer by making hotels and other related businesses far more transparent." Sure, guests always had the ability to complain to the front desk or on one of the comment cards left on the nightstand, but that information went no further than the management. (As *Heads in Beds* author and former hotel employee Jacob Tomsky notes, "We used to confidently toss comment cards in the trash"—or, as they also referred to it, the "t-file.") Now one's smallest observation—the ecstasies of the rainfall showerhead, the disappointments of the room-service toast—has a global audience.

So huge is the "TRIPADVISOR EFFECT" that it can IMPACT ENTIRE COUNTRIES. One study found that as Irish hotel managers scrambled to respond to reviews, THEIR HOTELS ACTUALLY GOT BETTER.

Those reviews carry demonstrable weight. A study by Cornell University's Center for Hospitality Research found that for every percentage point a hotel improves its online reputation, its "RevPAR" (revenue per available room) goes up by 1.4 percent; for every point its reputation improves on a five-point scale, a hotel can raise prices by 11 percent without seeing bookings fall off. This has been a boon for smaller, midpriced, independently owned hotels. "Twenty years ago, the brands owned the sense of quality," says Bjorn Hanson, a professor at New York University's Tisch Center for Hospitality and Tourism. "If I stayed at a big-name hotel, I knew what I was getting." That sense of confidence in quality, argues Hanson, has been supplanted by TripAdvisor. Not only can there be variation within a brand, but suddenly that quirky hotel that was once the obscure favorite of a single guidebook gets lifted to market prominence. Thanks to TripAdvisor, a formerly sleepy spot like the Magic Castle Hotel in Los Angeles—ranked number one in the city—is, says Hanson, "able to generate rates and occupancy levels that from a hotel-analyst point of view are quite extraordinary."

SOCIAL MEDIA officially took over travel in 2010—or so the scientists say. That is the year, according to the Cornell study, that "guest experience mentioned in customer reviews" became the factor most frequently cited by consumers in surveys about the process of choosing a hotel.

For hotel owners, this meant that a luxury brand or pictures of nice-looking rooms on a website were no longer enough. Instead, believes TripAdvisor's Messing, service became paramount. "That is why the number-one hotel in a major market is often not the hotel you would expect." TripAdvisor's ranking system, she says, operates like a value index: "For what I paid, how delighted was I?" The company closely guards its algorithm, but it's engineered to emphasize the quality, frequency, and freshness of reviews.

If rankings were based only on the number of reviews, says Messing, "It would be purely a popularity contest or a size contest—the big hotels would always win."

The impact of the so-called TripAdvisor effect can be enormous. When a group of researchers at Ireland's University College Dublin examined hotel reviews in the Las Vegas market between 2007 and 2009, and compared the data with reviews in the Irish market (where, they noted, TripAdvisor was a more "recent phenomenon"), they found that while ratings in Las Vegas remained more or less constant during that period, in Ireland they rose from 3.6 to 3.8 bubbles. Their takeaway: as Irish managers scrambled to respond to the novelty that was TripAdvisor, *hotels actually got better*. Additionally, responses to customer reviews more than tripled over the two years of the study.

Adam Medros, who heads TripAdvisor's global product division, told me that hotel owners have started thinking of the site as a

WISE OWL?

Perhaps the biggest lesson of TripAdvisor: paradise is in the eye of the beholder

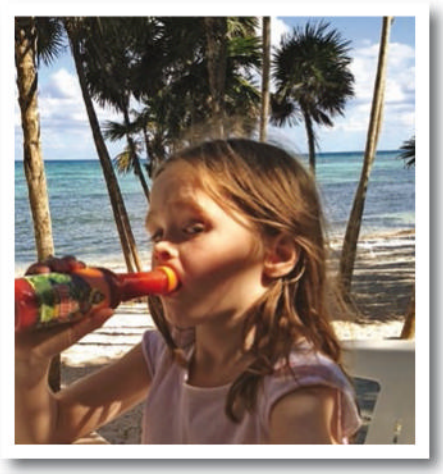
MOUNT McKINLEY, ALASKA

"An excellent mountain. Beautiful and majestic."

"Loved the pure beauty, the surrounding glaciers, mountain ranges and heaps of snow. Nothing to dislike unless you do not like snow or beauty."

"Denali Park big disappointment."

"I was expecting animals running around everywhere.... Not going to happen. When you do see them you will usually need binoculars.... You can sit in your home and see much more on a TV screen [than] you will ever see there."








marketing platform and are "embracing the feedback, even if it's negative." A recent internal TripAdvisor study found that owners who respond more frequently to comments are over 20 percent more likely to get booking inquiries. "Saying sorry is important," says Medros, "but it's not enough to say sorry you didn't like the carpet." Instead, the reply should be: "Here's our plan for fixing that."

Indeed, NYU's Hanson says that TripAdvisor reviews now factor into the "capex," or capital-expenditure, decisions companies make. "A general manager can go to the owner and say, 'Look at the comments we're getting about furnishings or parking lots compared with our competitors,' " Hanson says. "Instead of 'I think we should do something,' it's 'The reviews are costing us occupancy and average daily rate.' " TripAdvisor now goes "way beyond the individual traveler making decisions," he says. "It's influencing owners and brands. Even lenders will ask, 'Are we putting our capital into a hotel that's at risk because it's getting poor reviews?' "

I made a motion to call the front desk. THEN I REMEMBERED, FROM A TRIPADVISOR REVIEW, that THERE WERE NO PHONES IN THE ROOMS! I was reliving SOMEONE ELSE'S INFERIOR SERVICE EXPERIENCE.

ALL THIS IS a remarkable turn of events for a site that, back when it was founded in 2000, considered consumer reviews an afterthought. TripAdvisor was conceived as a meta-aggregator of travel information. Cofounder Stephen Kaufer, a Harvard-trained computer scientist who has served as the CEO and president from the beginning, directed employees to link to travel articles around the Web. But the site also let users post their own comments. Very quickly, TripAdvisor realized that the user reviews were getting all the traffic. As the *Harvard Business Review* described the situation in 2012, "They adjusted to focus on user reviews, such that fresh, authentic content was always available and didn't cost the company any money to produce."

In 2004, TripAdvisor was purchased by Barry Diller's media conglomerate IAC for $212 million and was soon put into a group of travel brands under the Expedia umbrella. Over the next few years, it grew from a start-up with $23 million in annual revenue into a multibillion-dollar global brand. In 2011, TripAdvisor was spun off as its own company again. In recent years, Kaufer has orchestrated a series of aggressive if rather quiet acquisitions, from booking company Viator to restaurant-reservations app La Fourchette to airline seating guide SeatGuru to VacationHomeRentals.com. Last year saw the introduction of a battery of new TripAdvisor products, including city travel guides you can use offline on your smartphone and a feature that lets you book an Uber ride to the restaurant whose TripAdvisor reviews you were just reading. The trajectory points toward the brand becoming a kind of always-there digital concierge.

While the big booking companies like Expedia and Booking.com also let users post reviews, no one matches the volume or weight of TripAdvisor, Hanson says. "If it were retail, we'd be calling it the category killer." Those reviews have become part of a self-perpetuating, incredibly profitable cycle. Visitors go to the site to read reviews written by travelers, book a hotel based on those reviews (with a small percentage going to TripAdvisor), then write reviews of their own,

and so on. As *Inc.* columnist Jeff Bussgang put it, describing TripAdvisor's 98 percent gross margins, "For every dollar of revenue, the company is able to drop nearly half to the bottom line. I'm not sure the mafia could do better." Perhaps not surprisingly, TripAdvisor is greatly expanding its headquarters outside Boston, and last year Kaufer took a 510 percent raise, to $39 million, making him the country's fourth-highest-paid CEO. (Somewhat ironic for a site based on the promise of democratization and transparency, my requests to speak to Kaufer, and to visit the company headquarters, were turned down.)

Of course, when you are becoming a kind of middleman in the affairs of virtually every hotel in the world, there are bound to be complications. TripAdvisor has been the subject of numerous lawsuits that question the veracity of its reviews. When a hotel in Tennessee made a 2011 TripAdvisor list of the dirtiest hotels in America, the owner filed a $10 million defamation suit. Christopher Bavitz, the managing director of Harvard Law School's Cyberlaw Clinic, which filed a brief in support of TripAdvisor, notes that federal law "essentially says that a website is not to be treated as the publisher or speaker." It is a case, he says, of what is called "Internet exceptionalism," and it dates back to the early days of the online world. As he explained it, "If CompuServe were held liable for every crackpot thing that someone said in a message board, the entire thing might grind to a halt." The court ultimately ruled that calling the place the dirtiest hotel in the country wasn't defamatory because people understood that it was hyperbolic.

This is not to say that an individual can't be sued for defamation for a review he or she writes on TripAdvisor. But early precedent seems to go against such lawsuits succeeding: In December, the Ashley Inn, a hotel in Lincoln City, Oregon, dropped a suit it had filed against an anonymous reviewer ("12Kelly") who'd said the hotel's "rooms are nasty." The reviewer, the judge ruled, was protected by media shield laws.

European officials have had a different take. In 2012, the UK's Advertising Standards Authority decreed that TripAdvisor could not use phrases like "reviews you can trust," because it couldn't prove that its reviews were truthful—or had even been written by actual guests. Last December, Italian regulators fined the company more than $600,000 for, as *The New York Times* reported, "not doing enough to prevent false reviews."

Indeed, bogus comments are a central challenge for TripAdvisor. The company has cautioned resorts that have tried to game the system by offering incentives to write positive reviews and notes that every single review goes through a tracking system, which maps where, when, and how (desktop, mobile, tablet) each was written. Automated tools designed to sense "algorithmic signals" of suspicious activity are backed up by a 250-person content-integrity team helmed by Medros and made up of staffers with fraud-detection backgrounds in police and intelligence agencies. (TripAdvisor declined my requests to speak to any of them.) If the team determines that manipulation is going on, a hotel could end up with the ultimate mark of TripAdvisor scorn: a red badge that warns users not to trust what they read.

But a more prevalent defense is crowdsourcing. The sheer scale of TripAdvisor creates, Medros argues, a kind of self-enforcing equilibrium: you would have to write a lot of fawning posts to sway the bubbles of the 12,000-review Bellagio. Even then, he says, you will only draw more people expecting that enhanced experience. "Even if you could beat the system, it's like Sisyphus—the rock is going to roll down the hill." Users, Medros insists, can "suss out" the outlier in a sea of positive or negative reviews. This speaks to what may be an even greater problem than fake comments: too many.

IT BEGINS WITH a simple message—"Plan and Book Your Perfect Trip"—and a search box. In the background beckons, at least on this day, a perfect coastal village in Greece. I was a few keystrokes away from paradise.

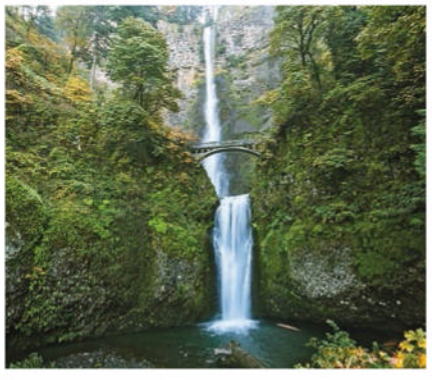
A number of months ago, I was looking for an easy winter getaway for my family. My wife and I wanted something to satisfy us (i.e., not Disney World) and our daughter (i.e., anywhere with a pool or ocean). I decided to plan the whole thing on TripAdvisor.

We eventually settled on Tulum, Mexico, the once ultra-bohemian outpost downcoast from Cancún that has become a kind of gentrified Brooklyn South, both for its East Coast proximity and its shared cultural vibe (read: beards, bike paths, yoga, organic everything). But with copious archaeological sites, spectrally lit underground freshwater pools, known as cenotes, and the sprawling Sian Ka'an biosphere reserve just to the south, it still seemed a worthy adventure.

As I came to understand while planning the trip, the more you hand yourself over to TripAdvisor, the more you get wrapped up in its worldview. I began to see Tulum less as a place unto itself than as a vast Gringolandia construct of projected desires and flummoxed expectations, worried last-minute inquiries about *federales* and *narcos,* a galaxy of unsmiling concierges and complimentary upgrades. I wondered how such a colossal gulf could exist between two humans having, at least on paper, the same experience. How can one place be "almost the perfect dream" and also a "horrible experience that no one should go through"? The language of the reviews started to affect me. I closed my eyes and saw phrases like "exceeded my expectations!!!!" silhouetted on my eyelids. In a vision quest of user-generated feedback, I reworked reviews into haiku:

The ruins of Tulum
They are so boring and hot
Where is the damn beach?

And just when I thought I'd found a hotel, after I'd digested dozens of raves, I would come across that *one* review—the cockroach in the salad bar. Behavioral economists call this the Volvo problem, after a thought



MACDUFF EVERTON/GETTY

WISE OWL?

COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA, OREGON

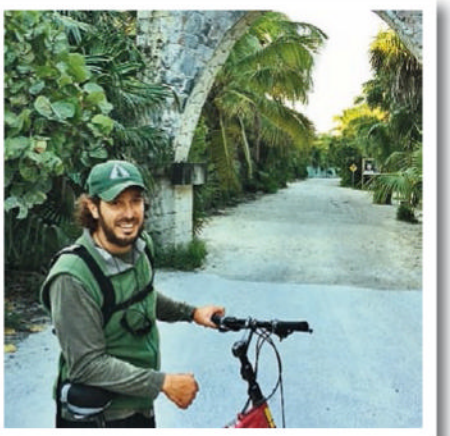
"A Thousand Kinds of Beauty!"

"I have lived and traveled around the world—but few things I have seen can even come close to the infinite variety and beauty of the Columbia Gorge."

"Not sure i understand the attraction."

"Another thing i dont get. It's a river. It's not the Mississippi which is a huge awe inspiring river, it's not the Chicago River which flows backwards and flows between gorgeous, towering [skyscrapers]."









experiment in which a prospective car buyer, having read in bona fide sources like *Consumer Reports* how great a car is, hears from a neighbor that his is always in the shop. Suddenly, that aggregate of rational, emotionally distant information is overwhelmed by a much more narratively powerful, personally relevant source.

And TripAdvisor reviews are nothing if not narratives, often bursting with details that stray far beyond thread counts and shower sizes—a roster of travelers' previous trips, the fact that a couple was celebrating their 16th wedding anniversary, or the reflection, offered by one reviewer, that "sometimes I stay up late playing my guitar." They also, as TripAdvisor's Messing noted, tend to present things on the sunny side. Camilla Vásquez, an applied linguist at the University of South Florida and author of *The Discourse of Online Consumer Reviews,* has thoroughly analyzed a corpus of TripAdvisor comments. She notes that, within a "categorically negative review," there will usually be "an effort to work toward some feature of the hotel that's positive." Even in the most withering one-bubble critique, 30 percent of her sample included "some kind of positive statement." As Vásquez explains, "We all know those people who will complain no matter what, and reviewers work hard to present themselves as not that person."

As I read up on Tulum, it became more a game of parsing reviewers themselves (are they like me?) and trying to decode the more cryptic comments ("Found the owners to be quite French"). This is why, according to Philippe Brown, of the luxury tour operator Brown and Hudson, TripAdvisor has not necessarily proved the lethal threat to travel agents that it was first assumed to be. "There's too much info, and so many hidden agendas, like national or regional biases," says Brown. Visit TripAdvisor, he says, and "you've probably learned that a hotel is filthy, according to Italian people, but people from England think it's great." There is, he says, "loads of info, but no insight."

TripAdvisor claims that it's trying to solve the information-glut problem: instead of giving you 12,000 reviews of the Bellagio, how can it provide, in the first page or two, the half-dozen that are most relevant to you? When I spoke to Medros, he explained that the company was busily beta-testing a number of personalization algorithms. "Some are based largely on past behavior. We had one case of a user who had written tons of reviews of Best Westerns," says Medros. "When that person looks at a new city, and the first hotel we show them isn't a Best Western, that's just wrong." Medros envisions a kind of Pandora-style travel genome—if you like hotel X, you will love hotel Y. Of course, this works only if the reasoning makes sense: early on in my research, before I had selected a destination, when I looked at one property—"#33 of 48 hotels in Managua"—I was told that I had been sent there because I "researched similar hotels in Captiva Island." Really? How similar are hotels in an upscale Gulf Coast enclave and a gritty Central American city?

TripAdvisor has also rolled out Facebook integration. Suddenly, those reviews from Facebook friends, and friends of Facebook friends, pop up first (if you've given permission). I found that this helped, but only to a point: my family's TripAdvisor account was linked to my wife's Facebook page, and often the reviews would note that some "friend" had stayed at a particular hotel—the only problem being that we had no idea who the person was and if we should trust them any more than Bob from Saskatoon. But Medros calls it a "starting point." "Even if my friends are idiots," he says, "I still want to know what they thought of it."

DRIVING DOWN the dusty, mangrove-lined track to Hotel Jashita, in Soliman Bay, Mexico, I passed a man on foot who, as I'd learn a few moments later at the reception desk, was the property's co-owner, a dapper Italian named Tommaso Marchiorello. While we talked, a fragment of one of the hotel's TripAdvisor reviews floated into my consciousness. "Lots of smiles," it said, "but he came across as ... stand-offish." I actually wasn't getting that vibe, but it raised the question: How much can one person's experience match my own?

Quite a lot, in fact, at least on more cut-and-dried matters. On our second night, my five-year-old daughter, settling in for bed, spied a lizard on the ceiling. As this proved altogether too novel, I was implored

WISE OWL?

SLICKROCK BIKE TRAIL, MOAB, UTAH

"Only for the hardcore on bikes."

"It is stunning scenery and could almost be described as fun, but it is very difficult, particularly in 98 degree heat."

"Seems to be designed for the masses of beginners."

"We were so frustrated by it's lack of flow and low reward for the work. It seems it's designed to purposely slow you down and keep the hoards of tourists/beginners from ending up in the hospital."

to dispatch the hapless creature. Deciding to outsource, I made a motion to call the front desk. Then I remembered, from a TripAdvisor review, that *there were no phones in the rooms!* I suddenly realized that I was reliving someone else's inferior service experience. Then it occurred to me that I actually like the absence of phones (not to mention televisions) in rooms. And that lizard? It evaded the best efforts of the night man. My daughter, naming it "Lizzie," made her peace. The subjectivity of travel, like life itself, balances on a knife's edge: I could just as easily have disparaged the creature-infested, amenity-lacking room as rhapsodized about its Zen-like simplicity and proximity to nature.

In fact, TripAdvisor looms so large in the hotel's success that when Jashita, which formerly had occupied the number-one spot for Tulum, was grouped into a new category for Soliman Bay, which is about five miles north of Tulum, Marchiorello's business plummeted. "From one day to the other—boom!—all the reservations and the e-mail dropped," he said. So he started working with agencies like iEscape to publicize the hotel. While his bookings and ratings have recovered—Jashita showed up as TripAdvisor's number two in the whole Riviera Maya region when I was there—he pointed out that "Nothing would bring us the business that used to be brought from TripAdvisor when we were number one in Tulum."

After a few days, we traded our private plunge pool for a more affordable hotel, Don Diego de la Selva, in Tulum proper, which, like Jashita, was a TripAdvisor Traveler's Choice. Charles Galligani, who moved to Tulum ten years ago from Paris, opened Don Diego just as TripAdvisor was gaining steam. "We followed the revolution," he told me. For Galligani, the reviews are a testament to the vagaries of taste and a way to fine-tune amenities. "The beds are a bit too firm for the Americans and, on the contrary, for the Europeans they are not firm enough," he says. (He has added a few softer beds.) "South Americans prefer the upper floor," he said. "They say, 'I don't want to stay in this jungle, it's too dangerous!' "

How did TripAdvisor perform outside of hotel reviews? We had a delightful dinner at El Asadero, an Argentinean-style steak place in Tulum that was ranked number four of all restaurants. Restaurare (number nine), a vegetarian spot on the beach, was tasty if a little rustic—the generator-supplied power blinked out briefly, although bonus points went to the hostess, who gave us homemade mosquito repellent. The taqueria Antojitos La Chiapaneca came highly recommended, but that may have had more to do with price and location than anything else—frankly, I've had better tacos in Queens. Some of the best food we had—the grilled *boquinete* at the beach shack Chamico's in Soliman, the zesty *enchiladas verdes* at the Loncheria El Aguacate—were recommended by people we'd met but were many pages down on TripAdvisor, so who knows whether we'd have ever found them.

Wherever I go, one of my highest priorities is getting on a bike, and a TripAdvisor forum pointed me to iBike Tulum, located just off the cycling path on the way to the beach. The owner, Arturo Ramirez, not only hooked me up with a Specialized mountain bike, but also turned me onto a feisty Sunday-morning group ride (replete with stranded tourist rescue and crocodile sighting) into Sian Ka'an. The next day, we visited the lagoons of Sian Ka'an on a Yucatan Outdoors kayaking adventure, which was ranked number five of Tulum activities—and, it should be said, deserves its five-bubble rating. In between showing us boat-billed herons and offering my daughter tasty *bananitos,* owner Antonio Arsuaga told me that TripAdvisor is essential to his business. "It helps us to be more stable," he said. Hotel employees who might normally recommend his outfit come and go, Arsuaga said, "but in the virtual world it stays."

Leaving the cave tour at the cenote-and-zip-line complex Aktun Chen, where the guide's joke-filled patter was as smooth and gently worn by time as the stalactites, we saw a huge sign, decorated in TripAdvisor green, with the brand's signature owl, imploring visitors to post reviews. Spotting the owl became a game for my daughter: at the *palateria* in town, on the gate at Don Diego. By the time we were at the Cancún airport, passing by a small room that a TripAdvisor sign claimed was the best "fish spa" in Mexico (the fish nibble at your feet, offering a unique sort of pedicure), I began to feel a rash desire to partake in some activity that was *not* on TripAdvisor, an experience that had not already been mediated by the leveling winds of mass opinion—a rathole restaurant or fleabag hotel where I didn't already know the front-desk clerk's name. I wanted to have no expectations, either exceeded or unmet.

But all this was my young backpacker self speaking; as a harried dad, I needed some assurance that things would work out. I'd been wise to give in to the crowd. *O*

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR TOM VANDERBILT (@TOMVANDERBILT) WROTE ABOUT WEARABLE FITNESS TECHNOLOGY LAST APRIL.

"THE BEDS ARE TOO FIRM FOR THE AMERICANS and NOT FIRM ENOUGH FOR THE EUROPEANS," said the owner. "South Americans prefer the upper floor. They say, 'I DON'T WANT TO STAY IN THIS JUNGLE!'"



THOMAS PICKARD/AURORA

WISE OWL?

ANGKOR WAT, CAMBODIA

"Wow!!"

"Could not believe how intricate and magnificent the ancient builders [were]. Must see to believe your eyes and take in the glory!"

"BORING!!!"

"It's just a bunch of fancy rocks on top of other fancy rocks, inside a hot Jungle."

ADVENTURE TOOLS, TESTED & REVIEWED

ESSENTIALS 04.15



MALTE SPINDLER/DIE BRUEDER/SEALANDER

WANTED

The Good Ship Sealander

A CAMPER-TRAILER THAT'S AS CAPABLE ON WATER AS IT IS ON LAND

by Chris Dixon

FROM TINY SHELLS with Swiss Army utility to opulent retro Airstreams, it's safe to say that we're enjoying a golden age of the mini camper. But the Sealander—a curious hybrid of a yacht and a pop-top—beats them all. Leave it to the Germans (makers of U-boats and the Volkswagen Westfalia) to build a luxury travel trailer that can be towed behind your car at 60 miles per hour and do double duty on calm water.

This diminutive teardrop is handcrafted with a watertight, one-piece plastic hull, and the main hatch and massive roll-back roof open the interior up to the heavens. Each model also comes with a galley, fold-down beds, and sleek wood paneling and cabinetry. The tiny, ten-horsepower outboard motor isn't made for waterskiing or braving big swells, but it's perfect for largemouth casting or sipping margaritas in the moonlight. $17,000; sealander.de


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IT'S HARD TO COMPREHEND JUST HOW GOOD MOUNTAIN BIKES HAVE GOTTEN IN THE PAST FEW YEARS, THANKS TO LIGHTER, STIFFER FRAMES AND WHEELS AND EVER IMPROVING COMPONENTS. WE RODE 36 NEW MODELS AT OUR ANNUAL TEST IN TUCSON, ARIZONA. THESE SEVEN—FOUR 29ERS AND THREE 27.5S—BLEW OUR MINDS.

by Aaron Gulley

EDITORS' CHOICE

1



The **Gates carbon drive** on the Cream SS swaps out the standard chain for a grease- and oil-free belt.

2



3



4



1. Specialized S-Works Enduro $9,300
BEST FOR: Just about anything.
THE TEST: If you need proof that 29ers are here to stay, this is it. All our testers agreed that the Enduro allowed them to ride beyond their abilities. The bike is like black magic: at 27.3 pounds, it's so light that it climbs as well as a cross-country machine, yet it's also rooted and confident enough, with 155 millimeters of rear travel and a 160-millimeter RockShox Pike RCT fork, that it descends like a runaway freight train. The new, wider Traverse SL Fattie rims provide even more certainty in steep, rocky terrain. Yes, it's insanely expensive, but the Enduro is a study in what's possible. Plus, there are three lower-priced versions, built with the same geometry but less expensive parts, starting at $3,300.
THE VERDICT: The next evolutionary step in mountain bikes, for those looking to up their game. 27.3 lbs; specialized.com

2. Spot Cream SS $8,900
BEST FOR: Not worrying about shifting.
THE TEST: This titanium single-speed 29er is smooth enough to make you want to forgo gears. The new Gates Carbon Drive Red is as squeak- and maintenance-free as the original. It also pairs beautifully with the Enve M50 wheels—the lightest, fastest option on the market. The 100-millimeter fork from BOS is so silky and solid that several riders said they would trade up, despite the premium price ($1,080). And though hardtails tend to be rough, the titanium frame and smartly oversize, 2.35-inch tires make for a surprisingly plush ride.
THE VERDICT: The ultimate single speed, even if it isn't especially light. 21.9 lbs; spotbrand.com

3. Niner Jet 9 RDO Carbon $6,800
BEST FOR: Racing in style.
THE TEST: By shaving excess carbon during manufacturing, Niner made its 100-millimeter Jet 9 RDO even lighter and more chipper than previous iterations. It's a study in refinement, with swoopy lines, flawless internal cable routing, and a house-brand cockpit and saddle that look and ride great. The stunning new inverted 120-millimeter RockShox RS-1 fork—which adds precise steering, thanks to a one-piece carbon crown—so perfectly matches the aesthetic that it could have been created for Niner. And every component, including Stan's 29-inch Arch EX wheels, SRAM XO1 drivetrain, and Shimano XT brakes, delivers premium performance at mid-range pricing.
THE VERDICT: A connoisseur's speedster, as fast and composed as a BMW M5. 24.9 lbs; ninerbikes.com

4. Trek Remedy 9 $4,990
BEST FOR: Elite performance at a tolerable price.
THE TEST: The biggest surprise for testers was that the 140-millimeter aluminum Remedy kept up with most of the carbon bikes we tried, even though it costs $3,000 less. Trek managed to make the chainstays short for quick acceleration and the headtube angle shallow for stable descending, yet the ride position still felt low and nimble—an impressive feat for a long-travel 29er. The new Reaktiv shock uses two chambers to produce excellent small-bump sensitivity and still feel plush on bigger hits. The tubeless SRAM Roam 30 wheels are fast rolling, the Shimano XT brakes offer the best stopping bang for the buck, and the RockShox dropper post is a boon at this price point.
THE VERDICT: An incredible all-arounder, if a bit heavy. For another $840, the carbon-frame 9.8 trims 2.5 pounds. 28.9 lbs; trekbikes.com


WILDERNESS
SAFARIS
HOANIB SKELETON
COAST CAMP
PHOTO BY DANA ALLEN
OutsideGO
JOIN US FOR TRUE ADVENTURE IN TRAVEL.
OUTSIDEGO.COM

JUICED
Shimano's XTR Di2 delivers all the benefits of electronic road-bike components: it's lightning fast, shifts under load, and dumps gears with a single button push. It also assesses cadence and efficiency, then picks—and shifts—between big and small front rings for you. Riders worried about loss of control, but the feature can be turned off. By test's end, everyone agreed it was seamless and eliminated the need for a front shifter.

1



2

KILLER VALUE



3



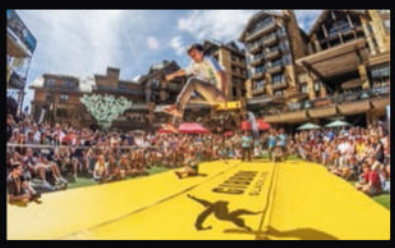
1. Pivot Mach 4 Carbon $9,000
BEST FOR: Teched-out speed freaks.
THE TEST: Pivot partnered with Shimano to develop XTR Di2, the first electronic drivetrain for mountain bikes, and the integration in this 115-millimeter carbon ride is flawless, with the battery tucked neatly inside the down tube and clean ports for internal cabling. Though some testers initially resisted the electronics, the impeccable shifting won over everyone. It's more than just a flashy drivetrain: the Mach 4 has low stand-over for maneuverability and excellent pedaling efficiency, courtesy of the DW-Link suspension. With a 120-millimeter Fox fork up front and a 68.2-degree headtube, this is the new cross-country-bike paradigm, spry enough for racing but still capable for all-around trail riding.
THE VERDICT: The future is now. 24.6 lbs; pivotcycles.com

2. Intense Tracer T27.5C Foundation $4,600
BEST FOR: Slamming downhills.
THE TEST: Even with its 66.5-degree head angle, the Tracer proved surprisingly nimble on several ledgy, technical uphills. That's courtesy of the adjustable suspension design, which allows this 27.5er to flop between 140 and 160 millimeters of travel without tweaking the geometry. Even on declines, most testers loved the shorter travel mode, which had the bike charging through pedal sections and provided momentum-gaining pop out of dips and corners. The bike is stable as a sled on descents, and we love the Foundation build kit, which gets you solid components (Shimano SLX drivetrain and brakes, RockShox Pike RC fork) at a reasonable price. The only thing missing is a dropper post.
THE VERDICT: Bridges the gap between trail bike and downhiller. 29 lbs; intensecycles.com

3. Ibis Mojo HD3 $7,900
BEST FOR: Enjoying the ride (on any trail).
THE TEST: Six inches of travel may sound too big for every day, but we would actually consider the third generation of the Mojo as a one-bike quiver. It combines 27.5 wheels with a not-too-slack 66.8-degree head angle and super-short chainstays. We found that it climbs like a chimp, even at 28.5 pounds, clambering over step-ups and roots courtesy of the DW-Link suspension and the extra clearance of the Shimano XTR 1x11 drivetrain. Our tester had upgraded suspension, including the highly tuneable Cane Creek DBInline shock and the new 160-millimeter Fox 36 RC2 fork, which challenges even the supremacy of the RockShox Pike with its solid, smooth manners. We loved the massive 741 rims for the wider contact patch and traction, until we broke the rear—a manufacturing error that's since been fixed.
THE VERDICT: An enduro bike for the crowd that likes to pedal. 28.5 lbs; ibiscycles.com

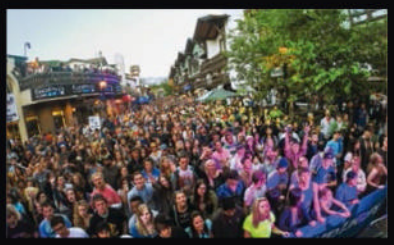
For reviews of dozens more bikes from our test, pick up *Outside*'s summer Buyer's Guide, available in May.

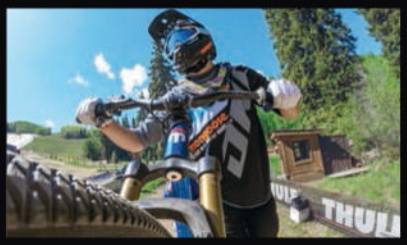
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THE NORTH FACE
HELIOS
CHALLENGER ATR
montrail
THE NORTH FACE



Instead of chunky lugs, the Helios SR's grippy outsole has **deep waves of foam** that roll easily on packed dirt and provide plenty of traction in loose terrain.

Ground Control

SPRING'S BEST OFF-ROAD SHOES STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN SPEED AND COMFORT

by Justin Nyberg

FAT BUT FAST

Hoka One One Challenger ATR $130
Sure, it looks as thick as a Dickens novel, but the crazy-light Challenger ATR's low drop and fast turnover managed to recruit a few of our most dedicated minimalists to its cushy cult. Thanks to a snug lace-closure system, it's easily the most secure-fitting Hoka yet, which means more stability on steeps—though its inherent tippiness on off-kilter terrain means it still shines brightest on mellower trails, where the rockered midsole and springy foam give a smooth, fun ride. If you think thick means soft and slow, think again. This beast flat-out flies. 8.6 oz; 5 mm drop; hokaoneone.com

CHUBBY AND AGILE

Merrell All Out Peak $130
With a full 32 millimeters of gummy foam underfoot, the All Out Peak lands just as softly as the Hoka. What sets it apart is a deeply lugged Vibram outsole that, combined with one of the most secure uppers we've tested, gives it a huge technical boost over other fat shoes on hills, rocky turf, and loose surfaces like ball-bearing gravel. But while it's reasonably responsive on toe-off and turns over fairly quickly, the All Out Peak is hefty and feels a tad flat in the heel, making it more of a cruiser than a speedster. 10.7 oz; 6 mm drop; merrell.com

TOUGH AND STURDY

Montrail Bajada II $110
The Bajada is an up-armored and supportive workhorse that loves long runs on technical terrain. Big guys will especially like the stout midsole, which gives it the stability and efficiency of a hardtail bike. While we did notice some interior foot slippage on hills, the Bajada's dry-weather traction is excellent—dozens of little square lugs grip solid surfaces like Velcro, but it never feels sluggish on hardpack. 11.4 oz; 10 mm drop; montrail.com

MINIMALIST AT HEART

Nike Zoom Terra Kiger 2 $125
This protective trail runner is really two shoes in one. A firm midsole offers decent armor on rocky terrain, yet the Kiger 2 also has minimalist DNA, including a rounded heel and structureless heel counter. This makes it seem a bit squirrelly on hills, but the compression-sock-like mesh upper is a nice antidote, locking down the forefoot for a secure feel when hopscotching over rocks. If you like a firm ride with quick turnover, this could be your new favorite hybrid trainer. 8.7 oz; 4 mm drop; nike.com

SUPPLE AND SPEEDY

La Sportiva Helios SR $125
The Helios SR is a slipper with a speed fetish. The lugless tread pattern is impressively tacky on dry and packed trails, and the locked-down fit in the midfoot and heel gives great stability on steep trails. Placing it closer to the minimalist side of the mountain-racing spectrum, the two-millimeter drop and Gumby-like flexibility make for an amazingly smooth, ground-connected feel. We prescribe it for efficient trail racers, midfoot strikers, and lean- or average-volume feet. Just don't look to this soft, thin shoe for stabilizing support or protection from sharp rocks. Size up: it runs small. 8.4 oz; 2 mm drop; lasportiva.com

MOUNTAIN GOAT

The North Face Ultra TRII $110
After dashing away with our Buyer's Guide Gear of the Year award last year, the low-flying Ultra Trail is back with a stout new ripstop upper that's even more secure than the original for better precision on rocky routes. Efficient runners will love the race-ready minimalism of the soft, thin outsole, which has just enough foam to take the sting out of a scree field without bogging down or muffling the contours of the ground. On anything dry, the traction is spectacular. 8.1 oz; 8 mm drop; thenorthface.com

Photograph by INGA HENDRICKSON

Travel Buddies

NO MATTER WHAT ADVENTURE COMES NEXT, THE RIGHT SAFETY TOOL MAKES LIFE A LOT EASIER

by Anna Callaghan

SOL Pocket Survival Pak Plus $80
There are a few things we always pack: a compact headlamp, a lighter, a multitool, and this wallet-size survival kit. Hopefully, you'll never have to use the scalpel or signal mirror—two of the 24 included items—but you'll feel better knowing you have them. surviveoutdoorslonger.com

This **theft-tracking sensor** has 18 months of battery life, so it won't run out of power midsearch.

Spot Trace $100
Whether you're cycling between vineyards on a fancy road ride or wandering in Marrakesh, the Spot Trace helps you hang onto the stuff you left back at the hotel. Using satellite networks, the egg-size unit pings you when whatever it's mounted to moves, then lets you track it via Google Maps. findmespot.com

SOG PowerLock Traveler $108
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Ramblin' Man

Touring musician and outdoorsman David Berkeley knows a thing or two about how to pack for life on the road

BY MEAGHEN BROWN

In college, singer-songwriter David Berkeley filed field dispatches for *Let's Go: Alaska* and spent summers guiding on the Snake and Salmon Rivers, which is where he began coming up with songs. "I wanted to be a travel writer, but I also loved to sing," he says. "Once I dove in, it was hard to climb back out." Berkeley, 38, makes his home in Santa Fe but lives out of a suitcase at least two weeks per month, performing everywhere from Wisconsin to the Netherlands. "The folks at Delta check-in know me by name," he says. His seventh album, *Cardboard Boat*—along with his second book, *The Free Brontosaurus*—comes out in September.



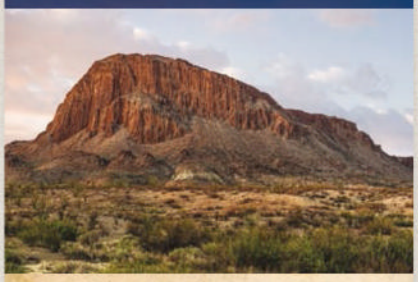
Mercury sweater by **Ministry of Supply** ($168; ministryofsupply.com); Popover shirt by **Hugh and Crye** ($35; hughandcrye.com); Slim Straight pants by **Combatant Gentlemen** ($40; combatgent.com); Pahono Mid shoes by **OluKai** ($140; olukai.com); Övik backpack by **Fjällräven** ($150; fjallraven.com); David's own socks

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GRAND PRIX **continued from page 86**

thrown by rescuers, but several boats are swept around the corner. The women ultimately do race, charging through the sluicing gorge with steely resolve. Eventually, the mood lightens and the Basse Cache slalom becomes competition at its best—skillful, difficult, and spirited. A cluster of spectators gather along the big rapid, and some skinny girls wearing backpacks full of Red Bull show up from Quebec City and pass out free cans.

The timing isn't announced during the race, but the top finishers are obvious because there are only three clean runs. The first is Garcia. The second is Sturges. In the short history of the Grand Prix, Sturges has never won a stage, and it feels like he's due. But no one is surprised when, on the final run of the Grand Prix, Jackson flashes across the chaotic ramp, plops cleanly into the pool, and beats Sturges's time by a few fractions of a second, once again winning the Grand Prix.

At the closing party that night in Quebec City, Troutman dances on the bar, the Ph.D. students are once again notably absent, and one of the volunteer staffers manages to get a Tinder match to show up. It appears to be going well—other than the fact that I hear her say that all the kayakers, even the women, smell like mildew. At one point, Sturges pulls me outside to perform one of his newest songs, rapping over beats he plays on his iPhone. He's not as good at hip-hop as he is at paddling, and the lyrics are a little earnest for my taste, but his rhymes are layered and complex.

Camblin sits mostly to one side, wearing his usual flat-brimmed cap and sipping on a whiskey and water. He looks sleepy but happy. At the awards ceremony, he had deflected most of the thanks, even making Bailey announce the winners. He also somehow managed to skip the official post-event group photo. He's got a long way to go, with the last two videos as yet untouched, but he's satisfied that the event went off well.

He talks about taking the next Grand Prix to Nepal and says he's been figuring out how to hold a future stage in the Niagara Gorge, a massive Class V run below the falls that's currently illegal to paddle. Toward the end of the evening, Sturges does handstand push-ups on a table beside the dance floor, which is packed with sweaty kayakers, and when I see the staffer leave with his Tinder date, I think it's probably time for me to call it a night, too. I scan the bar for Camblin, hoping to say goodbye, but apparently he's already slipped out the door. *O*

FREDERICK REIMERS IS A FORMER EDITOR AT PADDLER *AND* CANOE & KAYAK *MAGAZINES. THIS IS HIS FIRST FEATURE FOR* OUTSIDE.

NAIDOO **continued from page 79**

like me became marketable," he says. "I jokingly said the term NGO no longer stands for nongovernmental organization, but next governmental official."

He founded an umbrella group for South African NGOs, then joined Civicus, a small human-rights organization that punched way above its weight. He was soon fielding invites to talk at venues like the World Economic Forum, in Davos, Switzerland. His many fans from the international NGO circuit point to one stand-out trait: his humility. "When he comes in and speaks, he's speaking on behalf of a lot of people," says Cynthia Ryan, a trustee of the Schooner Foundation, which funds human-rights and security initiatives. "He's very aware of that."

Naidoo started tuning in to environmental issues in part through his daughter, Naomi. (He has never married; Naomi's mother is a friend from Oxford.) In 2008, he joined Greenpeace Africa as a board member. In 2009, Lalita Ramdas, the chairman of Greenpeace's board, called. At the time, environmental NGOs were starting to look south and east while moving away from nature-centric strategies and toward a vision that accounted for human well-being. Greenpeace, meanwhile, was caught largely in the past. "They needed to bring relevance to an organization that many saw as increasingly irrelevant," says M. Sanjayan, executive vice president of Conservation International. But Naidoo was 19 days into a hunger strike to protest the humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe.

"Thank you very much," he said. "But I'm afraid it's bad timing."

That night he spoke about it with Naomi. "Dad," she said, "if you don't consider this, I'll never speak to you again."

So he took the job.

GREENPEACE HAS an annual budget of about $330 million, all of which comes from individual donors or foundations; it doesn't accept corporate contributions. That's roughly $200 million more than Conservation International's annual operating cost, but $300 million less than the World Wildlife Fund's and $400 million less than the Nature Conservancy's. Naidoo doesn't wield the influence that the Nature Conservancy's Tercek or Conservation International CEO Peter Seligmann do. He can't preserve small Edens with the stroke of a pen. His compensation is also lower: Naidoo makes about $150,000—around a quarter of what Tercek does.

But Greenpeace's resources are used in a way that gives Naidoo a singular power, one that is particularly scary if you're the CEO of a multinational corporation. Greenpeace spends about $100 million a year on

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NAIDOO campaigns and media outreach, much of which is aimed at attacking specific brands. These days it pays to be seen as a Greenpeace ally—or, more specifically, to avoid being seen as a Greenpeace foe.

I saw this firsthand at the climate summit in New York, where executives from Asia Pulp and Paper pulled Naidoo aside for a photo op. In 2011, Greenpeace targeted the toy company Mattel over its use of packaging from APP, which was clear-cutting Indonesian rainforests. It first tried to convince Mattel to change its supply chain. When Mattel didn't, Greenpeace's social-media team cooked up a video in which Barbie gets dumped by Ken. In the spot, an unnamed whistle-blower shows Ken a video of Barbie chainsawing orangutan habitat. Ken yells, "It's over! That fucking bitch!" After receiving 500,000 e-mails, Mattel dropped APP.

Other successful campaigns have targeted Nestlé, for its use of Indonesian palm oil in KitKats, and Facebook, for its reliance on electricity from coal-fired power plants. (The latter campaign was coordinated on Facebook.) Last year, Greenpeace took on Lego for its reported $116 million partnership with Shell, the Arctic-dreaming oil giant. Lego resisted an initial protest, in which Greenpeace activists dressed as Lego people showed up at the company's flagship store in New York City. But in July, a video showing toy figures drowning in oil went viral. Six million people read the words "Shell is poisoning our kids' imaginations." As a result, Lego agreed to stop selling Shell-branded toy race cars.

Business executives I spoke with portrayed Naidoo as a shrewd, pragmatic negotiator who would rather implement change behind the scenes than twist a public knife. "He's not an extremist," says Paul Polman, CEO of Unilever, which was persuaded by Greenpeace to ditch hydrofluorocarbons, a greenhouse gas used in refrigerants. "It's not always Greenpeace's way or the highway. It helps with these discussions to take the emotion out of it, and Kumi should be credited with that."

To Sea Shepherd's Paul Watson, this is called selling out. "They're a multinational eco-business," he likes to say. "The have a ship that goes around fundraising, and they make money from people's genuine concern." He also told me, "Kumi's not really an environmentalist. He came from a human-rights background. What did change since Kumi came in is that Greenpeace isn't doing as many campaigns."

GREENPEACE would readily agree that its focus is increasingly multinational. The plan for the shift to developing countries—the "new operating model," as it's called internally—was first raised by Naidoo's predecessor, a German scientist named Gerd Leipold. But Naidoo, who is at heart a community organizer, has made it a defining cause.

"We don't win if we don't win in the countries with significant population sizes in the global south," says Naidoo. "Even if everyone else says, 'We'll do the right thing,' if China, Brazil, African countries, and India go for a carbon-intensive economy, we will lose."

Under the system, scheduled to be finalized by the end of the year, all 40 of Greenpeace's national chapters will pool their funds. Areas like Asia, Africa, Brazil, and the U.S. (important because of its energy consumption) will receive the lion's share of the money, while big fundraising countries like Germany and the Netherlands will sacrifice. Nearly 70 of the 250 jobs in Amsterdam will move overseas, a process that's already begun.

Campaigns in the global south and east take many forms. Some are feel-good, like the 2010 effort to set up solar-powered projectors in rural South Africa so people could watch the World Cup. Some are contentious: last year, the Indian government froze Greenpeace's funds for six months and arrested two of its activists in a heated battle over a proposed coal mine. Some are still fuzzy: in China, where civil disobedience is

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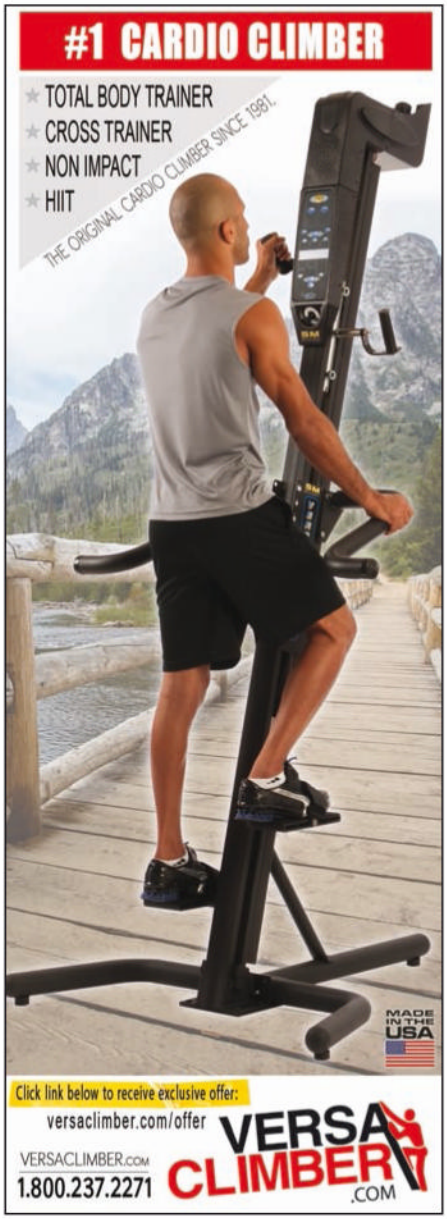
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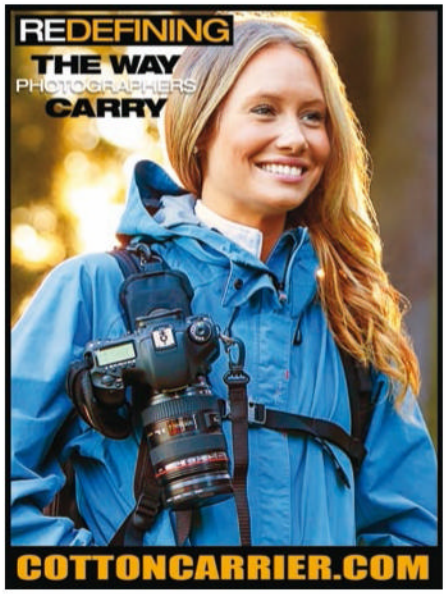


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NAIDOO

about as welcome as FREE TIBET stickers, Greenpeace has focused on legal campaigns and awareness-raising art—ice sculptures melting in front of a temple and a powerful short film about smog by a Chinese director. Some can be dangerous: in 2010, a Greenpeace camp was torched in Indonesia, and someone hung an effigy of Naidoo outside the Jakarta office in 2012.

And some are pretty boring: in Cameroon, Greenpeace has quietly informed communities about a New York agriculture firm that wants to clear forests to produce palm oil. The idea is not to claim credit but to educate locals so they're better prepared next time. "Kumi is encouraging people to look at issues more systemically," says Annie Leonard, the U.S. director. "The environment is deeply connected to all these other issues: economic injustice, racism, problems with neoliberal economies. That is a deeper analysis than 'You have to save the forests,' and I appreciate that."

Another U.S. staffer put it more succinctly: "He's helping privileged environmentalists pull our heads out of our asses."

Still, the master plan has created friction. Last summer, the European press, which covers Greenpeace closely, erupted when one of the group's financial officers lost four million euros speculating on international markets. Then Naidoo's second in command, Pascal Husting, was outed for commuting regularly to Amsterdam from his home in Luxembourg by plane. Forty-three members of the Netherlands office called for Husting to resign. Naidoo apologized and Husting kept his job, though he now takes the train.

"This was hugely sensitive," says Sylvia Borren, the director of that office. "I'm not sure Kumi and Pascal understood the reputation risks in the Netherlands on this." Borren is a firm supporter of Naidoo's changes. "There are still a lot of people who want Greenpeace mostly how it was—David and Goliath," she told me. "We're not in that space anymore. I'm not a hippie. We're a major organization, and we need to get more professional."

IN THE AFTERMATH of the Nazca stunt, some observers raised their eyebrows at the notion that Greenpeace's leaders were ignorant of the plan. "There can be no doubt that Kumi knew of the stunt beforehand," Paul Watson wrote on Facebook. "And if he did not, he should resign for the incompetence of not knowing that this action would take place."

There was also plenty of anger within the organization itself. Greenpeace code stipulates that activists take responsibility for their civil disobedience, but the Nazca 20 fled. It looked cowardly. "We don't do that," said one U.S. staffer; another told me, "I want to know who needs to be told to leave."

"This activity was completely in violation of Greenpeace values," Naidoo said. The situation put the organization's leaders in a bind: normally, Greenpeace takes pride in protecting its activists by paying their legal fees and attracting media attention. Now it was in the sticky situation of condemning the action publicly but refusing to name those responsible out of fear of legal repercussions.

In December, Greenpeace launched an internal investigation. Naidoo told me then that it appeared the stunt had been organized by a single person without institutional approval. When he testified at the preliminary hearing in Nazca on December 18, he revealed the organizer's name to Peruvian authorities. "What do you do as a leader?" he had said to me then. "On the one hand, I had to do the right thing in terms of accountability. On the other, I had to take into account that many young people in good faith relied on someone leading the process."

He didn't tell me the person's name, but judging from early press reports, it wasn't too hard to suspect Sadik. This was confirmed a few weeks later. In January, the First Court of Preliminary Investigation in Nazca issued an order of preventive detention—basically an arrest warrant—for Mauro Fernández, a 26-year-old Argentine who had served as spokesman on one of the videos of the stunt. Fernández, along with the AP and Reuters journalists Abd and Villarraga, were charged with attacking cultural heritage, which can carry a six-year prison term. On January 18, a visibly shaken Fernández, speaking from his home in Buenos Aires, told a Peruvian news station, "Sadik is the one who evaluates the situation and designs the activity and makes the final decision."

Two days later, a lawyer for Greenpeace International delivered papers to prosecutors in Nazca. They contained voluntary statements from Fernández, Sadik, and two other Germans, all of whom described their roles in the action. Sadik—who, through Greenpeace, declined to speak to *Outside* after the Nazca action—named himself as the organizer.

Naidoo rejected the idea that Greenpeace was making one person fall on his sword. "From what I'm being told," he said, "the activists didn't know what site they were going to beforehand. So people acted without proper information, and the person holding the information didn't share it. It seems fair that this person should hold responsibility."

What about the organization's decentralized structure—did Greenpeace's guerrilla strategies open the door for errors in judgment? "It's not about changing the fundamentals of our approach," Naidoo said. "This

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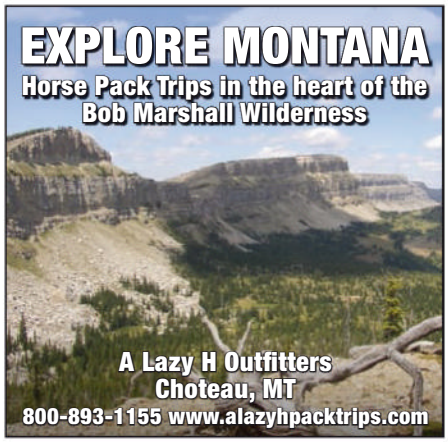
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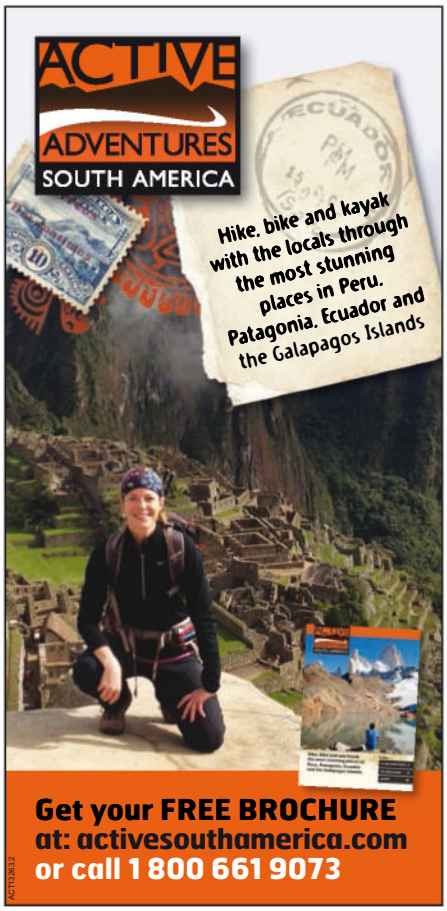
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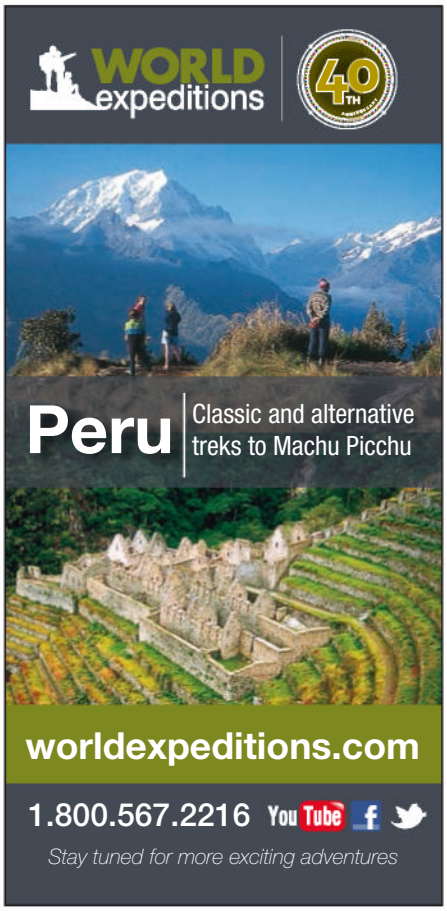
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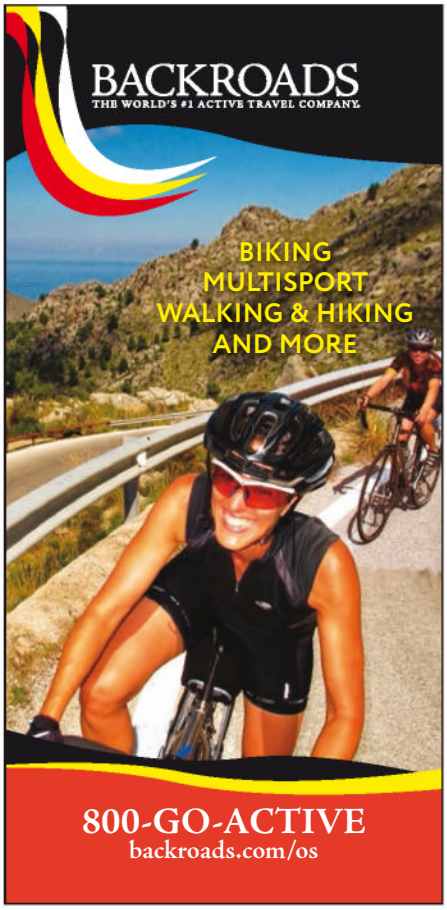


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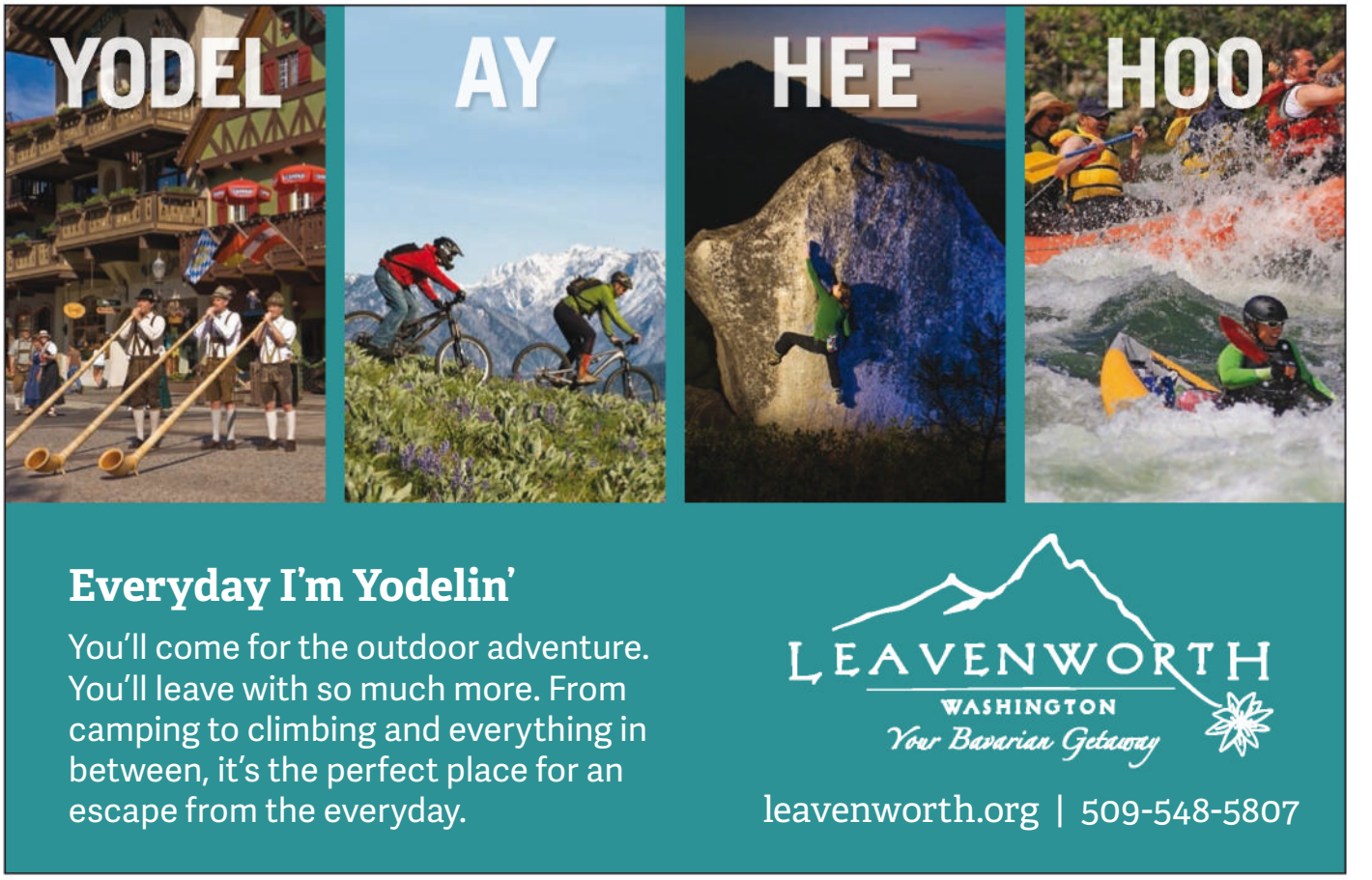






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NAIDOO

was an objective individual failure rather than an objective institutional failure." Still, he seemed optimistic that the activists might avoid prison time. He cited precedent: in 2013, followers of the Dakar Rally, an international off-road car race, inflicted significantly more damage to the Nazca Lines and avoided punishment. That same year, with government permission, a Red Bull BASE-jumping team landed near the lines in wingsuits.

When I spoke with Ana Maria Cogorno, director of the nonprofit Maria Reiche Association, which is dedicated to protecting the lines, she suggested that the government was using Greenpeace to divert attention from its own unwillingness to preserve the site. "They have to blame somebody," she said. She's no Greenpeace fan, but she hopes that the attention might finally lead to some protections. "Greenpeace has been such a help to me!"

As of early February, no further charges had been filed. Greenpeace was wrapping up its internal investigation, Sadik was working in the Germany office, and the others were still on the payroll as well. An Argentine judge declined to detain Fernández but ordered him to stay in the country and remain near his home.

How badly the episode will damage the organization is another question. "The way it's been presented by Greenpeace is that it was a rogue event," Michael Dorsey, a member of the Sierra Club's board of directors, told me. "There are very few groups that have rogue events. And anyplace you have that, it gets shut down and people get fired."

Both Tercek, the Nature Conservancy CEO, and Sanjayan, of Conservation International, believe Greenpeace can weather this if it learns from its mistake. "I don't think it will hurt them in fundraising," Sanjayan says. "People who support them understand them. It's like, 'Yep. Par for the course. That's Greenpeace.' But if Kumi wants to coalesce the organization around a few key points, this does derail that. He'd do well to more strongly articulate what they want, and to build around that, because otherwise the brand is going to get diluted. I mean, think about the word, the name Greenpeace—I'm not even sure what that means."

It means different things to different people in different places. In the U.S. its activists are seen as treehuggers. In Europe they're keepers of a noble flame. In boardrooms they're threats. In India they're criminals. And in Naidoo's mind they're just getting started. "The way I see it," he once told me, "addressing climate change is more important than all the injustices we've fought over time put together. Colonialism, slavery, apartheid, women's right to vote. This is about survival. So if it was OK for people like me to be prepared to go to prison and be prepared to get killed, then surely when the very future of the existence of the species of humanity is at risk, then I think we need to be willing to take much higher risks."

In December, Naidoo hinted to me that plans for more actions were in the works, things that might replace Nazca in the news cycle. But not everything fades. Look at a recent aerial image of the Nazca hummingbird and you can clearly make out the giant C—a big, curving line in the sand. It will probably be around for a while. *O*

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR ABE STREEP (@ABESTREEP) WROTE ABOUT SHARK CATCHER CHRIS FISCHER IN FEBRUARY.

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FRIENDSHIP HIGHWAY, TIBET
Photograph by NATHANIEL WILDER





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